

Title Page

24 June 2019

The Longhaulers,
Rhapsodies from the Highways

By

Mary Seacross

"The LA Cowgirl"

Former title:
The American Nomads

To The One and Only,
Thank you for hundreds of thousands
Of safe miles!

To Short-Fuse,
Whose idea this was,
Siempre Fi!

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24 JUNE 2019 CREATED IDENTIFIABLE TITLE PAGE FOR INTERNET ARCHIVE

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Dedicated to

And, of course
To the Longhaulers
Who are Still out there every night

All names and companies are changed to protect The Guilty - as charged! The places are all true - we really did *all* those miles, my God!

I use the word 'man' generally throughout this piece, but by no means do I not mean lady truck drivers - for I am one myself! And, also I say 'American' I really mean 'North American' to share in a heritage of Epic Long Hauling across this vast continent: Americans, Canadians, Mexicans, Russians, Sikhs, Cowboys, Cattle Drivers, Pioneers and so on; to mean any one who works and spends the night asleep upon the roads, doing this work, this tome is for you:

Long Hauler,
LONG, LONG Hauler!
Long haulin' all the day long!
This is Our story, this is Our song:
Rolling and rolling
All the day long!

Ideas to Write about:

(Bolded means they are done)

Asterisks mean to definitely write a whole piece on it. The rest should be included as details in stories within.

Shooting with Short Fuse

'Escorts' across the Verazano Bridge and 12'7 bridges

Stuck in Calgary 7 days

Stuck in Edmonton 8 Days - John the windmill puller Ice trucker

The Convoy: Comradeship from Red Deer to Cheyenne

Memorable Border Crossings

The Lady Moose Hunter in Saskatchewan

Family Dollar account

Dollar General in OKC doing a 360 degree back across all roads and

Laptop stolen

Trip to Spain

*Continental Stormfest 2010

*Amish in Montana and me in shorts, grizzly bears

The Passenger

The Shoes still in the Trees in Springfield *change name of town

Jimmy and Jamestown (Change all names!) The Mac Man

Lake Louis - and the spirit shaken, Indians break out in singing

Other nice places hometimes: Niagara Falls twice, The Grand Canyon, Snoqualmie Pass

*Victoria, and Vancouver Island, Strait of Juan de Fuca Ferry

Crossings And all the crack heads in Paradise

*Historic Railroad in Boise, id

*Short-Fuse and the Life Flight - Heroes on the Highways

My first load and the Boston Mafia and Italian thin crust pizza

Hurricane holidays

Angels: Sue Morrison

Icing up in Missouri

*Driver Appreciation Day on Annacis Island, Vancouver, BC

Journey into the Sun

I didn't like my job - who does? I suppose, though I was educated, I was a nonconformist and had trouble at work, not because I didn't get along, I was rather popular. But, no, I just didn't fit in, for I was a maverick, a solo act. I was so colorfully creative that I didn't do well building Stryker Armored Vehicles for the Army - as an engineer. I was a writer and I needed to find some space to find that in myself.

And I wanted to leave The South after the soldier who'd married me, had taken me to Europe for a tour and then had parked me in Alabama, and had moved on, on leaving me stranded in the lush forests of Alabama Appalachia. I was from California - the big west that I saw in the dust of the warm sunsets, and I suppose I had a bit of the wanderlust about me when I saw the big rigs roaring down I-20, so shiny and new and they were headed off to my homeland, towards the sunset lands I called mine. Although I'd never seen one up close before - no one on either side of my family had ever been on the road - I thought that I just might be able to do this - I might just be able to do it. And then I could go home.

And so pretty, up so high, all those shiny dials I used to peep at as they flew by me into the sun, they were the High Plains Drifters roaring down to fly off, invincible as they flew on and I was stuck. After a couple of years clearly in the arts, with the Right Brain so overcoming the good sense of the Left, I could no longer consign my mind to cubicles, Access databases and Excel Spreadsheets, so I thought, well why not write while on the highways and of the highways?

A week or so later I found myself in Atlanta lining up with a bunch of guys - it reminded me of Navy boot camp, ready for the Doc to check us all out.

Then I was assigned a trainer nicknamed "Tiny" an American Indian of at least five hundred pounds. And onwards to Fort Wayne, Indiana we took off that night and I got my first taste of real driving that day on I-75, Northbound side.

And that was many years ago, all 48 lower states and Canada Coast to Coast and so many winters, nigh, I am still writing and I am still rolling, down the highways, fine.

And this is my tale as I became a part, at three thousand miles, a week, of a breed like no other in the world; I became a part of The Long Haulers.

Forgive my excesses, in advance, I beg, for this is an honest account of myself, my foibles, and I hope, my laughter through all the miles. I don't claim to be anywhere near *Perfect, USA* and my shortcomings, well are not so short! But here you have my stories and

Long Haul Trucking down the highways and I'm telling this as an 'AS IS' deal. No refunds.

Here are some stories, some laughter, some tears... and some verse I wrote to make sense of it all as I laughed as I cried, as I rolled as I wrote on and on, and thought, I'd never come home again.

San Diego, California
January 2012

*"It's not the years;
It's the miles."*
Indiana Jones

Blood, Sweat and Tears (and a few giggles)

"You can't win and you can't get ahead..." I was telling an enormous black man - who was the attendant at this itty small truck stop in North Carolina - I am telling him my woes, *whining* in other words, just boo-hooing bigtime, folks. At this point I had a year of long hauling under my belt.

He had just help me slide my tandems to a better hole and, then when she still didn't scale out right, he dropped my landing gear for me and cranked it way up high until the Fifth Wheel would slide - it was fully loaded at 45 thousand pounds and he was doing way more than he should and I was really grateful - sometimes these are hard tasks for us women to do and he was a powerfully built man. "I used to be a truck driver once." He explained, whistfully, and we talked for some time inside - it was a quiet night. He said with wonderlust in his eyes "I might go out again - one day."

"Don't do it, you have a good job here, right?"

"Yes, but I miss the road." And his eyes grew distant, looking at the horizon as the open road beckoned him, once again.

"Don't do it. Everybody hates you out here!" I interrupted his reverie.

"I don't know about that..." he said wistfully looking upwards to the pass, to the high forested mountains of West Virginia and Fancy Gap.

"But, sometimes, I even cry..." I was saying "I'd like to come off the road... it is I who envies you!"

He held up a large arm and I had a feeling that I was about to hear something pretty unforgettable, something wise and something quite grand and he said to me: "You can't quit now."

"What!"

"The Road - it's got into you now."

"I'd like to think I can get away."

"Look, Mare, it's Blood, Sweat and Tears... tonight you sweated sliding the axels, right? And now you said you've cried, and I know it's hurt you, knicked you... *it's blood, sweat and tears - it's in you forever now.*

" And I've never forgot his kind, wise words, as I roll on - many years later - He was right. I have never stopped rolling hence.

Trucking gets in your blood - there's nothing like it - **it's the last great American job** - you're up high, you're your own boss, your own cowboy. The scenery is *endlessly* beautiful and panoramic, the trucks sweep down the highway in a graceful arc and roar and cry. And so I pull on, onward writing and learning. And I love my job, and

as I began to see beauty and laughter in just everything in this world, I began to be reborn as the writer that I am as well.

I had many a laugh, once I began to channel all my anger and pain into getting it into a concise summary of what *The Road* meant for me - I found giggling here and there, I found beauty in the laughter that came from all the tears... and from the blood and the sweat. Man, they don't pay by the teardrop!

And so I include the stories and verses here and there, in this collection of Trucking, celebrating my brethren and our ways, and the Mighty Courage it takes to be an American Long Haul Truck Driver across this vast continent. I toast you on down the highways!

Short-Fuse

"There are no Redheads from Ramona..." he was saying while putting back on my mud flap

I wasn't always a Blonde - for my first year solo on the road as a truck-driver, my hair was a bright, fire-engine color - a color I was to find that caused men to drop things (Charlotte, NC Pilot Truck stop) or jump when they turned around (Omaha, NE Sapp Bros); but which didn't fool Short-Fuse who said slyly in our first meeting in Friendly, MN:

"There are no Redheads in Ramona - no *real* redheads..." he insinuated while he was sticking back on a mud flap I'd knocked off.

"You know something, you're right." I said, remembering vividly the very last real red hair I'd seen there - it was a pigtail that I had yanked and had got sent to the office for - this was in the 5th grade. "So you guessed it - I'm actually really just a blonde."

"Do you know how I knew you were a really a blonde?" he said while tightening the nut.

"I don't look naturally as a redhead?"

"No..."

"Ramona is a very Hispanic Town?"

"No, not just that?"

"Oh, how then?"

"Only a *blonde* would ask which way a mud flap goes on."

"Hee! Hee!" I laughed "Yeah... it is rather obvious isn't it."

"Not to a Blonde." He teased, screwing on the bolts.

This was when I was a very Rookie driver and my trailer was making hissing noises as the forklift inside of it was unloading it. I looked to the truck next to me, the driver was bent over on the wheel - doing his logbook fiction and he was a very attractive guy sporting a Marine "High and Tight" and I decided that he looked safe enough to go ask him about the noises.

"Oh, sure." He dropped what he was doing and jumped out of his tractor. By the catwalk he explained the noises were normal for automatic airbags when the forklift moves around inside. When I told him that the reason I was concerned was that I had knocked off my mud-flap and I was worried about the brakes. "No, they're supposed to do that." I was that much of a rookie!

He graciously offered to put the flap back on for me. He stated gabbing as he sent me inside to the Receiver for various tools, which was accompanied with a wily sense of humor and jokes. He also looked very clean and neat - for a driver. I was impressed. He told me all about himself as he put on the flap. He was a Texan, he'd been in the Marine Corps the same time that I had been in the Navy and had been on WestPac's on many of the ships I had dealt with in my ASW job. He could name names, and state ships he was on, and I knew simple from the style and kidding of his sense of humor was *all USMC* - that he was no imposter - of which both of us would meet quite a few hence afterwards.

I wanted to thank him by taking him out to eat. But he would have none of that. He just like to help people, he explained and he showed me where he had stowed tow-chains and extra mud flaps just for that purpose. I liked him when I saw all the extra stuff, immediately.

That day was many years ago; many miles ago; and - well, many mud-flaps ago - that he put back on for me. We started yakking on the phone every day, we starting meeting in many disparate places all over the country: Albuquerque, Cincinnati, Jacksonville, Ramona, San Antonio, and many more.

How he loved to tease me about that mud-flap - years went by with jokes on the mud flap. Nigh seven years!

And there were many other stories we compiled in our out loud compilation of jokes, adventures and of course harrowing true stories of the highways - the fire extinguisher, the Life Flight, The numerous Imposters and the many characters we found all along the way.

I recognized right off that God had provided me a trucking mentor - an angel - for I could turn to him with any equipment problem, any navigational problem, and after a while any dispatcher problem and then, any personal problem. I cried on his mental shoulders so many times on the cell phone, I laughed, I joked. The many years we both drove on the road together passed fast and wonderfully and it is now many years has passed at the time he first urged me to right all this down.

I owe him many thanks for all the laughs, all the years; all the help, all the tears he let me cry out. He became my brother. He was always there for me, year after year after year. He was kind; he was wise...

Everyone should have a friend like Short-Fuse.

Friendly, Minnesota
October 2005

My First Solo Load

"*Wouldn't you know it'd be Boston*" sounds very much like a country song about Trucking, but here I was going to Boston for my very first solo load - *Wouldn't you know!* I had hoped for an easy place like out in the plains somewhere, like Indiana, amidst the cornfields with endless room to switcheroo the rig all around and into 'The Hole.' But - woe is me, NO!! They were going to test me upfront and right away on driving and so to a major Eastern Seaboard city and so I went "Trotting away to Boston" I went and went right through a blizzard near Harrisburg, PA and was running very late.

When I got way up to Boston I found myself in rush hour traffic, but at least the weather was nice here, there was no snow, thank God. And I had even got pulled over by the highway patrol for I had called my receiver while I was driving I was so lost. The bear, he had a hat like a Gestapo, but he was so fit, I was drooling a bit, but he hadn't savaged my career and got me turned around in the right direction and now I was near the port - where I imagined we'd had our country's first tea party, and I still couldn't find it and the city was getting more downtown hysterically historical and I was getting worried - Historic Districts and Big Trucks just don't mix, y'know - especially with a very Rookie Driver, like Mare.

This load was in the month or two I drove completely alone, I hadn't met Short Fuse yet to turn to (and wail a bit), and I was on a very steep learning curve. We often called each hereafter this and like an Air Traffic Controller, if one of us was parked and guided the other lost craft on in - to places like Brooklyn or 'Lawn Guy Land.' (Where, I suppose there are more space for guys to have lawns on... but, I digress...) but here I was still alone in Boston, so I was still winging it. This was in the years before GPS became super affordable, and before I put mapping software on my laptop (both of which are outstanding, though not perfect.)

At least I was going some place interesting like Boston, up north, I had really never known too many northerners, (although I had extended family up there that I had once visited years before) having been raised in the West and lived in the South sixteen years I had always kind of wondered about northern - would I meet characters like those in the Godfather Movies?

'Na,' I told myself sternly: 'Let's just get the job done, Mare! Stop day dreaming! Look, we'll probably hit a big ugly distribution center, or some ugly industrial park or brand new docks with no historical interest, and then immediately proceed to a big ugly truckstop right off the interstate. You've got to get a grip on this job, Mare, it ain't going to be like the Navy - *'It's not a job, it's an adventure'*, stuff okay?' And, 'We' have got to face things, this is going to be a rough hard job with few frills!'

'Okay! Okay!' I told my Mare back, "Just quit cher nagging me!" I swear I wasn't crazy talking to myself, and I noticed right off, subconsciously that I was always talking to myself about 'We' and I realized many years later, why I seldom felt alone like the vast majority of other drivers - for the 'We' I said so often to myself was me and God, and I was praying in my simple way, although I didn't realize it for many years, silly as this was.

So as I got a side street near the downtown I spotted a decent classy looking lady with a woolen skirt suit and a lapel of fur and heels - *Wouldn't you know* - just as if I had dreamed her up as an classy eastcoast angel to assist me. She walking down the street and I tooted my horn ever so carefully as to get her attention without scaring her, and then set my four ways and brakes, cut my engine and jumped on out.

When she saw it was a female driving the rig - dressed as a lady even - I never went anywhere without doing my hair, makeup, etc and - something I found out that was to happen time after time and which gave me the same pleasure that a celebrity must certainly feel - she was dumbfounded!!

"You're driving that big thing!!" she finally let out.

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Well, I'll be darned!" and she went on like this for a while. And I finally got in that this 'super trucker lady' was a tad lost, just a tad.

"Oh! And I know exactly where you're going!" and she directed me to it, it was just one block down and you could even see it and she was pointing to it, while still exclaiming about seeing a real lady trucker. I felt like a movie star.

I honestly thought she was about to invite me to lunch or another tea party she was so nice (which such invites would really happen to me several times thereafter), but I had a hole to get to as soon as possible and I thanked her very much, and took off down the olden streets to Boston. And I found my company easily thanks to her.

"*Wouldn't you know*" my very first solo 'Hole' I was to do, was actually right in the street - in other words cars would be driving around my truck as I was blocking the street to hit the dock! Oh and that was fun getting the set up and swing just right as I was doing

all my maneuvers with cars dodging me all around. But I finally got it at somewhat of an angle into the hole and I passed out for many hours while they unloaded me - I was so tired that the cars buzzing all around the nose of my truck and the fact that I was sleeping in the very middle of a busy street in downtown water zone of Boston, could not keep me awake!!

Many hours later, I finally got unloaded and I waited right there in the middle of the street until I had my full ten hour break complete in the street - for I still had another delivery in Boston to do on this load.

This time it was somewhat easier to find - right off the interstate, although my second Hole ever took much maneuvering to get it in there. And it was at an angle they could barely get the dock plate on. 'Man, they're gonna be pissed.' I thought.

A whole team of guys where there to unload me and were a bit in a rush for I had been so late. And one of them, a handsome Italian looking guy told me "Oh, we're all going out for pizza and we're hungry."

"I'm terribly sorry about being so late!"

"Oh, that's all right. Hey, why don't you come with us?"

"Really?" I had not expected *this*.

"Well, what about my truck?"

"You can park it here over night."

"I can?"

"Sure. My name is Tony, by the way."

"Hi Tony, I'm Mare." He was a nice decent guy.

And so now I had a date! *Wouldn't you know...*

I got all dressed up - jeans and heals, hair curled a spritz - not typical truck driver attire. After I secured the truck with my cuff locks he drove me to his house in the suburbs of Brockton telling me all about the colorful Italian families that lived all along there as he drove. "Yeah, they're all in the Mafia, by the way." They were olden streets I would have never seen in my rig and it was truly a wonderful experience, my being from California where everything was brand new, without history and this was like being on vacation or a private tour. "Yeah, there some Italian families here, they're all in the Mafia."

"You're kidding me!"

And then he changed at his house giving me a tour of it, and we went to a local Italian flat crust pizza joint - I could have never gotten my rig even near this joint - or even near this part of town, it was all old quaint winding streets with gaslamps and cobblestones and I knew this was going to be pretty darn good.

And my date knew just everybody "Hey, there's TOE-NY!" and as we greeted people everybody was a character from a Godfather movie:

Clemenza was with his wife on the second aisle, Tessio, down the row, and Young Sonny was seated at bar with his buddies.

Tony walked all over the restaurant talking to various folks he all knew, "Hey, this is Mare, from California!" and he told me aside: "They're a Mafia family." "You're kidding me! It's just as I imagined it would be!" For, I remember the acute disappointment I felt once visiting Little Italy, in New York City and being served by a Mexican, and the place was all owned by Pakistanis, so I was very surprised that 'Old Italy' really did exist - near Boston! After a while of meeting more folks, though, I wondered, was everybody in the Mafia in this town? Perhaps my date was just as obsessed with it as was I was?

And his former girlfriend was our waitress - I think she still rather liked him - and I just sat there astounded at all this and the flatcrust pizza was just great - I remember it to this day. It was rather fancifully as I would have daydreamed it to be on my first load to Boston.

"Do you know that today was my very first load on my own, Tony?"

"It didn't turn out so bad, did it?"

"It sure didn't!" I don't want to get spoiled and think special things like this were going to happen all the time for I had '*girded*' (to quote God) myself up to expect just a terrible, terrible time getting the big rig all around Boston for these two stops and, when I had least expected it, I had had a fabulous time instead... *Wouldn't you know...*

Though I called Tony several times, this would be the first of many 'near misses' where guys would loose interest once they figured out I wouldn't be in town every week, or, even every month.

Later on, I accused God of putting two noses on me that I just wasn't aware of, for there must be sum'in wrong with me, for I just did not get a man. I guess I was married to the truck!

However, I never lacked in friends, and sometimes an enemies to boot, but I never seemed lonely, it may seem strange as I recount this alone on a thanksgiving in Scranton, PA, but I'd met a buddy - 'Big C' for 'break-fuss' and a few laughs included on the buffet. I am on my way to Towanda, a gas drilling boom-town that I had been cut off from the great floods of the hurricane season this year. I am interested in seeing some of this new wild west. But, I am not lonely, I swear; it's me and God, and 'We'.

Scranton, Pennsylvania

On my one trip to see my family I had noted the most pristine little town in Pennsylvania, right off of I-81. Adorable white wooden houses all along quaint drives, little did I know then that this was the one city in all of America I would go to the most until I left the East Coast for the West and an ailing beloved mother out there and had made the High Plains my solitary domain.

Short-Fuse and Ice

Short-Fuse was driving in _____ one winter night and other drivers were hailing him on the CB, “Hey, Driver you got an ice patch ahead of you in the granny lane at the 196 mile stick.”

“Thanks. “ and he merged into the fast lane, put on his four ways and slowed way the heck down to a reasonable forty.

A car flew down the load in a super-hurry (As they all are) and flew wildly around Short-Fuse who was also frantically honking and waving at the driver to slow down.

And he was sticking out his middle finger out the window offensively at Short Fuse said that was the last thing he saw as the car hit the ice patch and Short Fuse looked in the mirrors and he saw the car fly *end over end over end* and off the road down a hill and into the snow.

My friend couldn't get back over the ice to find out if the guy made it or not, which is what he usually does – he'd done so many times before – since I had met him. (Short Fuse and the Life Flight)

“I wonder if that was his last action on this Earth, Short Fuse” I said “flicking someone off who was trying to save his life.”

Cabbage

The mountain pass “Cabbage” loomed for me again, the Wicked Winding Cabbage and a storm had just dumped seven inches on her and I could have cozily stayed in Ontario, Oregon or closer in Baker, Oregon – but for the whole winter? ‘I wanna git’, I said to myself, and so as I drove to her, I figured out how to chain up over the pass more expeditiously:

Well, I knew already that I liked to get under the truck to hook them up and not waste hours trying to drive over them, so I had bought myself a rain suit, exactly for this purpose when I had left fair Salt Lake City, so I could lay right down in the snow and hook'er.

Then having a CB was really important – to ask *Where* to chain her up – you don't want to chain up in the snow!! So I find the dry ground immediately *right before the snowline* on the radio. I had chained up over Vale in the snow and night – I became exceedingly cold and I had lost three chains that night because I couldn't get them tight enough, and my hands don't work right at negative six, and made a huge mess inside my tractor because of the mud. So I insisted to myself that I Chain up on DRY ground in the day!

So Eastbound told me what spot and I then pull in there. Set brakes. I message my Dispatch “Chaining UP” and they always say back “Stay Safe” (I think they have a macro button that they push with

their pinky for that). And then I drop my trailer - the tractor is much easier to chain up bobtail. I then put on my rain suit and drag all the heavy chains out of my side box, drape them, lay on the snow to hook them, and bungee them. Repeat. I drive the tractor a few feet and re-tighten the chains, I re-hook the tractor up to the trailer and retighten the trailer chains. So far maybe 35 minutes has passed since I pulled off, but it beats rollovers.

I now take off all my raingear and, of course, re-do my lipstick. I am high and dry and happy. I even feel I look a little bit glam in my chains! Aretha Franklin is singing in my mind her very famous Trucking song:

*'Chain - Chain - Chaaaaa--iiiin!!
CHAIN-UP, Foooooooools!'*

I get back on I-84 Whiskey. Now you have a supreme feeling of safety! Crunch, crunch, crunch the chains just grab the ice so nicely, (traction increases by 500%) that you get the sensation of driving an M1 Abrahms, not a Freightliner). You have to go fairly slow, around 25 miles an hour, but the ride is safe and your chains make just the same sound Santa's do when he longhauls his sleigh around on Christmas eve:

*"Jingle-Bells! Jingle Bells! Jingle all the Way!"
Oh what fun it is to drive in the **400** horse open sleigh, HEY!"
Jingle-Bells! Jingle Bells! Jingle all the Way!"
Oh what fun it is to drive in the **400** horse open sleigh!!*

Then you take the breathtaking Cabbage down and wind and wind. The mountain falls off thousands of feet to the Port side. Words of other truckers who whine "OH!! I don't chain up!" fall away off too, as does the landscape does. You remember the pioneer trails are nearby, like 'Deadman's Pass'. There are many places all along I-84 where you can still see the ruts of the wagon-wheels they drove. You feel in touch with history, because you feel heroic taking this pass down.

Ah... there's now *Swifty*, on the shoulder, laying down on his starboard side, ah... tried to take Cabbage without chains and there is an Oregon state trooper standing outside by his carcass, studying our wheels to make sure each one of us has our chains on, and I not only have them on, but unlike most truckers, I ALSO got makeup and lipstick on too, and I shoot him a wily red smile as I drive on by that says:

"Nah nah nana nah-nah! SMOKEY! You ca--n't get meeeeeeee!"

Then I am mesmerized by the graceful arcs and turns, and advent of history of Conestoga wagons, supplemented by the wily whirling cars by my sides as always even done a pass. I ignore them; I am sky high and flying with the falcons across from me on the cliffs. I've taken cabbage in good weather too, she is graceful and winding and, though she is a scary girl, I rather enjoy her, for once, here doing our job in a showy courageous way - taking eighty thousand pounds down - and requiring guts to be listed on the CDL medical long form as well, and here, we are on high and with all soaring mountain ranges, lifted up to be reckoned with all the other pioneers who ventured in these treacherous lands.

Or, perhaps because I had none to love me and I thus subsisted on this Glory, instead, the glory of the open range peaks I climbed and descended while i regaled with all the long, longrollers by my sides! I was always one for story or glory, or both.

At the bottom of the transom, Cabbage, on the dry chain off area, I reverse the process I just went through, and Chain-off, go into Hermiston, OR. I still am pretty darn clean for chaining up/down a big rig twice in one day. I feel pretty darn glam! I then Drop and Hook my load at Wal-Mart and find that my new load goes right back over Cabbage again that day! Repeat Process.

*But the others, still waiting for a perfect Winter day
Saying: "OH! I don't chain up!"
Are still sitting high up in the mountains
And I am far away!!*

Backing up the Rig

Every man'll tell you that woman make better truck drivers, nearly every man say that to you. I'm sure but it was true sometimes - I was willing to do two, three or four pull-ups on an easy dock just to make sure I got 'er in there square.

And, convexically every man'll 'instruct' you if you're in a hard dock super slow and that's when I've knocked off a tail light of a truck in Regina, Saskatchewan because there standing there like a court jester twirling their forefinger a me, to tell me how to spin the wheel. And distracting me for sure! "Just tell me if I'm gonna hit something!!" but they can't resist the urge to 'train' me.

On the road, Jacob wrestled with an Angel...

"Let me show you how to do it." A guy is strutting up to me as I am dolly-ing up my landing gear in Kansas City as I'm hooking to an empty trailer in our drop yard. "I'm a trainer."

"Oh really?" I say trying hard to take the heavy sarcasm out of my voice - for I too was a trainer.

"Yeah." And he actually bends down and starts cranking up my gear! Perhaps at age four I could have done this task, but, no, I let him 'Train' me some more... This very thing had also happened to me in Carlyle, PA!

I can be lazy - or just plain gosh darn tired and sometimes I mined that treasure house, cuz I might chip a nail if I tried to hard to change my light bulb in the fuel aisle of Gallup, NM... But it gives so much pleasure to fix it for me, so who am I to deny them that??

Aw... the male ego at it again, LOL.

Jargon

'Pigpen, this here's Rubber Duck:'

I love the colorful lingo of my Chosen profession. Here is a translation so that you, m'dear rookie reader, can sound like one too if you like, once you get a CB installed on your dash of your car:

DOT - not my female friend of mine, not to be confused with Dot Com which is an internet thingy. DOT is the LAAAW, also combined with a state abbreviation like MO, to make a cute-sounding nickname like "MO-DOT" Missouri DOT or "O-DOT" or "OH NO - DOT" if you see him behind you whirling his 'cherries.' Stands, officially for Department of Transportation, but don't be fooled, by transportation they mean ONLY we, we the Truckers, the only aspects of transportation in this here country that they have any interest in, because of deep pockets. So it stands for, my friends IN REALITY: Department of Trucking.

Chicken Coop - Scale house or Weigh Station (Wage Station) which closely resembles a chicken coop in shape and size. This is for the DOTs to hang out in, especially when it rains. When it rains all the Bears (see Bears below) go in and hibernate there, or in caves that they dig themselves, I think.

Super Coop - a scaled up Chicken Coop, usually two stories high, full of bears (See Bears, Below) usually denoting a hard-ass, trucker UNfriendly state such as California (See Banning Scales, exit ____ I-10). You can judge the safety of your driving career in that state by

the size of their Chicken Coop. I got two tickets in California which I fought and beat. But you have to have a lawyer on retainer (legal insurance) to drive in that state. Of course you have to have a lawyer service anyway - it's kind of like malpractice insurance - against the DOT - (Department of *Trucking*).

Bear - Highway Pat. or Cop, DOT, TPS (in Texas) CHP, *The Fuzz*, Der Politzei, The Gestapo, and of course "Smokey". He's anything on two wheels or more (I haven't seen any bears on unicycles yet other than in Dr.Seuss) that can give you H*ll that day!

Polar Bear - variant, a bear in white

Plain Wrapper - a bear without markings 'in disguise' with ten antennas on its roof.

County Mounty - Sherriff

RCMP - Royal Canadian Mounted Police - Their High Patrol up in Canada. I've only ever seen just one on horse back, at a fair. Ah, the girl in me looked coast to coast, too!

Evil Knieval - Bear on a motorbike. What do we call those bears patrolling beaches on bicycles? I know not.

Lot Lizard - a whore, in truck stops, who jumps up, 1 to 4 times a night, on your running board in the middle of your safety break and messes up you entire night of sleep, thus making you a safety hazard. Not patrolled by bears of any kind, that would make them on OUR side! I remember hearing decades ago as a little girl about the enormous problems of prostitution in the TA West of Ontario. Fourty years passed, and they still had the same problem?? I saw at least ten lizards - all clad in outfits that cannot be mistaken as prostitutes: lingerie!!! These are Lot Lizzards.

Twenty - Location. For Example, 'What's the twenty on the polar bear?'
Whats you thirty? Don't know. Only 20.

Parking Lot - car carrier.

Deadhead - Not referring to the Grateful Dead, no this just means to drive without a load on your trailer, or to drive empty. Close to 'Bobtailing' which means to drive without a trailer, and, thus, also without a load, unless you can strap your load onto your catwalk in

back somehow.) Sounds kind of cool, don't it: "Hey whatcha doin today, driver?"

"I'm, like, Deadheadin' man, deadheadin'."

Hammer Down - get that load on down the road!! Peddle to the metel!

Hammer Lane - the fast lane, where, except in California, we can cruise at altitude speed. Except for the exit 134 I-5 in Stockton, California also called 'Hammer Lane' ironically has a sign accompanying it: NO TRUCKS ALLOWED!

Granny Lane - the one I love to cruise in, for Grandmas, althought to this date my brood have not reproduced, other than scanning themselves in and posting the pics on Facebook.

Four Wheelers Cars, the nonprofessional drivers, i.e. the amateurs, in here I called them the whily winding, weaving four-eyed four wheelers. I guess you could call me predjudice, though I love Hispanics, blacks, whites, and even Greens; I just can't stand Four Wheelers!

Mile stick marker, yardstick - we live by these out here. So Don't tell us the second Danbury exit, say: 'exit four in Danbury'. It's more precise, a quality like pinning the tail exactly on the donkey - so we don't have to break laws and do 'U' turns - the tail has to go exactly on the @ss of the @ss, okay!! (Hey that ain't a cuss word, okay? It's a donkey! It's even in the King James, so, Chill!). I digress. Use mile posts and exit numbers. Period - *The End!*

Drop n' Hook. "Easy" instead of sleeping while they unload you, you *just* drop your loaded trailer there then drive a hundred miles, criss-crossing Atlanta at rush hour on the 285 trying to find another empty to Hook to.

Truckstop - 'Buckstop' where they try to gauge you for everything - and this even included the air we breathe! Yes, indeed, and it's called 'Idle Aire' and you can get for two bucks an hour warm air - something I used to get for free - by idling my truck. Soon they got generators installed on our companies trucks and I wouldn't be idling and killing the ozone layer or polluting as much. Nothing like paying for air! We also have to pay for bridges. Since I must rest to do my job, I should be able to be warm - free of charge. What's next, are they going to charge me for using the toilet? For blinking my eyes? For watching TV? Many places already charged to park, will they charge me for thinking in there?? I'm sure glad they don't charge for laughing at all their rules - yet!

Just - not a technically correct trucker jargon used out here, (I can't quote CW McCall on this term) but whenever you hear that word 'just,' just get a grip on it, it's time to get really scared:

"*Just* chain up (and get the load over the mountain in a snowstorm)."

"*Just* go down the highway take three lefts and four rights, get on the frontage road and take the thru-way five miles, and take five more rights and three lefts." This is then followed by the famous last words: '*You can't miss it.*'

"*Just* get on the internet and Google it." (As if we all have internets out our butts).

Variants of *just*: Ought to, should of

'You shoulda been there by now.'

'Stop Should-ing on me!'

The Princess and the Peterbilt

Now we women can get egostical too, behind the nose of these big rigs too:

Once Upon a Time

There was a Princess in a brand spanking new, shiny black Long-nose 379 Peterbilt backing in the dock in Odessa, Texas. "Nice truck" I thought.

Once she got the 379 backed in there, I went around her - I had a large amount of room to do so. Apparently, though she was all the way in the hole, The Princess wasn't done backing yet and once she finished she got out of the cab and was standing by her tractor's shiny beautiful nose and hollering at me some words as I pulled forwards of her and opened my trailer doors before backing on in. I blew her off and backed on in.

I was tired sitting at my wheel rubbing my eyes and I turned and I see The Princess is still hollering at me in her cab at the wheel about 6 trucks over. Through all the windows I can see her arms are flailing, her mouth gaping like a goldfish. I blow her off again, go in the cab and sleep for four hours straight. I was really tired.

Late in the afternoon, I suddenly wake up and then get right up and sit up at my wheel to look back in my 'West Coast Mirror' at the dock plate light - wondering if I'm loaded yet. I look over that way -

she's still there sitting there at her wheel still staring at me!! She hadn't moved an inch. I noticed again, how shiny then was her rig.

Hours of unpaid sitting time go by and finally the dock plate light turns green and it's my turn to go into the shipper, he princess follows me in trying to talk to me, "Listen..." I duck her and go into the restroom. I take my time, I am still so sleepy.

I come out - she's still planted there in the foyer - she hasn't moved an inch.

"Listen, you're supposed to wait until the other truck is totally finished backing in before you pull around!"

I am already walking away, I confess. I am much too sleepy for princesses.

"So what." I say over my shoulder, blowing her off again. She wasted the entire afternoon trying to get me to care. I noticed as I left again, how shiny then was her rig.

How to get your wiper-gears motors fixed, Double Quick

At The Lodi Fly

Lodi, California

Once you try attaching the new blades themselves and find that the arms are making waving loopy sloppy swipes all over the windshield, and you need to head on over Donner Pass in Winter (Where they had dined on each other) and The *Ma-chine* Needs a trip to the shop ASAP. This requires a process of parking your rig, sending in the macro for a shop ticket and approval, then you go in the shop to arrange to get a PO and when you can pull around and actually get it repaired. This process could take hours - unpaid hours! Try the following instead: (It especially helps if you're a girl, although for most men that is not an option).

First, fuel all up so you can get yourself a free shower. Park the big ol rig in the lot. Proceed to said shower (ya hafta anyway right?). Then get all dolled up: Makeup curl hair, and put on some shorts, preferable pink.

Then drive right back to the middle of the fuel aisle. Park. Open the hood. Put your tool kit on your steers, put a screw driver in your hand. Climb up and Stand on top of your Cummins, Cat or Detroit (Yes, you can really stand on your engine, and in fact, that is the only way to hand clean your windshields real good). Once up there rotate body around to give everyone a good look, and then LEAN over and try to look really dumb, or hesitant with the screwdriver. In my case I didn't need to act too hard...

I made clumsy half-hearted attempts at the gears when I heard:
"Need some help?"

"Oh, um, well, I guess so." I said *reluctantly*.

Within minutes I had not one, but five guys all gathering around my wounded ma-chine's eyelashes.

"You get out your towing chain, lay it in front of your tractor by the towing hooks and then you scratch your head and look kinda helpless... or dumb - and this is how you get help on the highway."

Short Fuse. Lecture 2008.3.4

On: 'How to get a quick, free tow out of a divot'

"Twiddle that thinga-ma-jiggy." They all offered help one another, and now one was on top of my Cat and twizzling whatcha-ma-call-its. The others were instructing almost like in Greek Chorus all around the engine. one had come back to the scene with their own tools and were handing them up to the guys on top my rig.

Here, my friends, though, I confess that I really saw impressed I was not feigning; they had all the gears fully disassembled on a shop rag laying on the air filter, and sent one of the guys in with me to help me to buy a new sprocket thang from the shop.

It was AS IF they had all had a class in Changing Freightliner Century 2005 Wiper Gear Motors - 101. I don't remember that one in CDL school, nor high school either. In fact, I had a BS degree and I could not do what they did so well. Men are so good at fixing things!! Can you see a group of girls doing stuff like that? Helping out a stranger?? Man, men they're so *handy*. In fact 'handy' was a word that was coming to mind as I watched the man fiddling with my wipers on top my Cat, from *behind*. *That was my favorite part*.

I handed him up the part. They were like a well-oiled ma-chine themselves now, like a team, a football team in the dugout - or is that a baseball huddle? I digress.

"Okay, put that on the widget, and bend the rotor, there you go. Okay now, gal, turn on the switch."

And "wow!!" within 15 minutes of the start of *this* operation, the gears were fully reassembled and the wipers were smoothly and seamlessly sliding across the windshields and I was clean and showered and ready to roll over Donner!

I don't think the entire Road Breakdown Department of *Wample* could have gotten the job done more efficiently, speedily, or cheaply.

I tried to pay them, or buy them coffees, but they waved it off. But I do say, again: Thank you my guys, that day at the Lodi, Flying J Truck stop. You impressed me with your talent, help and comradeship - you can be so good to me!!

But I do think the pink shorts and makeup helped.

Special Forces

To the Newborn Baby Trucker:

"... you'll find that every guy out here is some kind of special forces" a waitress was telling me sarcastically as I sat in a restaurant at the Ellensburg Fly, WA with my trainer, when I took her that I was a rookie. "Welcome to Trucking!" She quipped and delivered me a real steak and it was my first lesson and taste of ego - the Male Ego - a subject I was to find out much being in *their* territory now and it was a subject that I was to turn to again and again in the many years to come, mostly for laughter, but then there were some tears too!

A few months after that, I'd finally become a qualified driver and I was about to go over the mountains that drop off in a cascade of huge bluffs in a infamous mountain pass called ironically "Cabbage" or sometimes "Cabbage Patch" - it reportedly looks like a head of cabbage from the air.

And so, being so new to the road and to winter - I stopped off to ask about the road conditions at the Pilot in Ontario, Oregon. Cabbage I had done with my trainer - to this day, remains one of the Interstate system's top scariest passes, it winds and drops over two thousand feet, full of ice. There was only one more deadly pass I did - on a back highway in Colorado - Wolf Creek Pass, which has a state trooper on it at all times, and has been the subject of a country song and at least once a year someone dies on that pass. So, when I did my trip planning and saw Cabbage awaiting for me, well, I just knew then I'd have to be really careful.

So I pulled off I-90 to scope out the weather, and as I swung her (Dinah was her name my new black Century) I could hear squeaking in my new CB - "Wow! Who's that?" and I look over and a Flat Bed-der is waving at me from his Kenworth as I pull up next to him - it was the easiest spot, being a rookie, back then I parked in back to avoid sweaty palms and terror of parking up close.

I rolled down my window to talk to them - they were two truck drivers from the same firm about to have a roast I asked them about the mountains and they invited me. Under the ominous Pendleton Mountain range we sat by the grill - they parked their two trucks into a 'V' which allowed for a little bit of privacy and comradely behind the cabs and they popped some beer tops, the fat one starts in with:

"Hey, you were in the Navy." He sees the anchor on my neck.

"Yes I was."

"I was too."

"No kidding. What rate were you?" This is the one basic question; I was to find that most imposters can't answer right off.

"I was a SEAL."

I just look; he is really heavy - like he'd never been in shape, ever. SEALs must have a rate though - they are usually Operational Specialist - I had had a date with a real SEAL once and also, it was common knowledge in the Navy, and so I press him - "which rate?"

"Oh, I was just a SEAL."

I let it drop at that - and the Ellensburg waitress's ominous words came back to me. Fortunately he didn't go on and on with his fake stories as other imposters that I met would do... on and on... One guy I met - 'Matt' was around thirty and each time I met him in various cities he added to his careers he'd had: Army Special Forces: Ranger, California Highway Patrol, Diesel Engine Mechanic, etc - he could not have done all that and gained fifty pounds all by the age of thirty! He even showed me his military id - it said E-2. I truly believe that there are not Rangers at E-2! Then he lied and said he'd been on the chopper that went down in the movie "Black Hawk Down." And I ask what country was that in? "Kuwait" knowing full well it crashed in Mogadishu, Somalia.

"Does one have to be former special forces in order to drive a truck?" I asked Short Fuse one day. "Do I look dumb or easy to lie to?"

"You want me to really answer that?" he teased.

"No, you, you butthead!"

I had made it up to a second-class petty officer - an E-5 before I'd gotten out of the Navy, and I was proud of that, then I had gotten a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science, but still I got lied to by imposters left and right in the years to come on the road. However, my tough "Former-Active" Marine friend Short-Fuse had the same kind of lies told to him, over and over because he still wears a 'high and tight' haircut, and I began to not feel so easily exploitable. It was just them - the men - and their big world of The Male Ego - which grows gigantic behind the nose of a Big Rig, like a Peterbilt.

However I can say one thing good about the kid, that was the best steak I had ever had, under the ominous Pendleton Mountains of Oregon!

Later, they were drinking beers and the other truck driver invited me into his cab to show me his cab and his computer - I hadn't been but in a Century and a Classic Freightliner and wanted to see what other trucks looked like inside. He had, by the way, very fancy controls all made of chrome for the various things - the Jake brakes, the Fifth Wheel Air Bags, etc. they were jeweled and encrusted in chrome - about five hundred dollars' worth - I believe - and showed the male egos love of things chrome and flashy.

"Go ahead and check your email" he says, so I go in the back of the cab and start clicking away.

So I enter my password and there's some news about my son that I deep into - my boy is joining the Navy! And then the fat kid got on

too and was checking his email in the passenger seat and before I realized it the truck was moving! The thin driver had many, many beers by now and I was terrified - were they going to kidnap me??? My mind spun!! I frantically signed off my email as we pulled out. I began looking for weapons to fight them off! I frantically grabbed the cedar tire thumper, and then, as we went throw deep divots and ruts in the lot I frantically looked for some kind of restraining device - like a bunk-net to hold me in the cab should we crash!

Down the highway we flew towards the Idaho boarder! He was wildy drunk! I wondered if there was an open scale!! Would I get in trouble too?? How could I explain this craziness to my company!!!

"Roger that, got a copy on that twenty." The thin one was saying, and carrying on with all the other truckers on the radio, on and on they went driving seventy, carrying on and I realized - showing off for me with all their trucker jargon - ah, the male ego and drink in full force and I began to pray earnestly for our safety - all of us on the dark highway stretch that night!

He turned the truck in the rest area - what would happen there? It was dark and rather deserted - he sat there for a while and yakked on the CB at the passing trucks - teasing them all.

Finally he started back to the Pilot and hooked to his flat bed and all was well and fine and I thanked them for the excellent steak and ride and split ASAP '*I gotta get up early.*'

Whew! *The Male Ego!*

Our Highways

Speaking of ego: I don't know if you know this or not, but,

YES!! We do own the whole darn highway!

If you LIVED out here every day for years at a shot, you'd feel this way too, Darn it! We've paid our taxes, our toll and our due! The road, alas, is our home!! And we'll let you use it - if you are nice. If not, I'd like to point out, I can weigh up to Eighty Thousand Pounds! (In the US and even more north of the border) This is around sixteen times you're size.

(Just a bit of Longhaulin Jokin'!)

Part II The Safety Gestapo

Electronically Hardened Hearts

One beautiful sunny Indian Summer day I had just parked in a truck stop on US 30 outside of York, Pennsylvania - it was a bright and sunny day, the cornfields were high and crispy and the Amish were ploughing them with their oxen in the fields next to the truck stop and the Amish wives were hanging their long black frocks on the laundry lines - the sun was out, it was time to be 'making hay' as the oldtimers called hard work.

But not for me!! Though it was noon, one of my electronical clocks - I have three - my 70 ran out of hours in the midst of this beautiful day. How could I sleep during this beautiful day?

"Beep!" and now I must sleep because they were giving me a load now to pick up ten hours from now - at 11pm - and run real hard all night, to one of the Carolinas.

I got on my phone and told me dispatcher I didn't think I could sleep.

I got a huge chewing out "All drivers are expected to run all hours given them!"

"But I'm going to have to take a sleeping pill to do these hours." And then boy, was I going to be groggy - in the middle of the night - when the deer are out, the roads icy and dicy, and I am at my worst. This just didn't make sense to me.

So I refused the load, and this went on my driving record - we were a 'Forced Dispatch' company - SLAVES in other words, with no say in how we did our jobs.

Worst of all, my dispatcher now behaved hideously to me: wouldn't answer my phone calls, wouldn't answer Qualcomm messages, set me up on the worst loads, and so on.

I looked out the window, the Amish were working hard, and I was not! Nor was I tired, nor would I be until late at night.

I tried my best to never run out of my 70 hour clock - I did what it took, I stalled, I had things fixed, I took time off to stop this from happening, but of course, this thing happened again and again over the years, and I thought how dumb can you get.

Before the economy tanked, it was assumed that to be a trucker was because you'd fallen into it - you had to do it, or else! Now the economy was low, man, all kinds of professionals were going into the trade - nurses, engineers, software professionals - or else; and so a different sort of people were flooding our trade - but somehow were

still looked down upon. I had a degree, I only repeat again, to stress that this was a CHOSEN profession for me, I loved the zest the freedom, but I found I was to be treated like a child:

Mommy Qualcomm

When I was a child I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things...

St. Paul

When I turned four I was alert, observant and potty-trained and I generally took good care of myself. I ate when I was 'posed to and I even took a little nappy-poo in the afternoon when I was pooped or, when my Mommy told me to. I was a good little girl.

And, now at the age of 45 I have something to do all that for me once again! Now I have something to tucky me in at beddy-bye time - at noon - when one of those multiple clocks run out, I get a 'Night-Night, Sweetheart' (buzzer) and a bedtime story even if I'm not-tired, nor would be after playing only three hours on the monkey bars or sand box or driving cross the Amish countryside on the Ohio Turnpike.

Funny, as a wee little thing, if I got tired, why, I'd plop myself down in front of Gilligan's Island and then I was down. I was only four, but I knew how to sleep: when I was tired. I have observed that even newborns are good at it, without any proper training or safety modules.

But, I have a New Mommy now!! Mommy Qualcomm! And she takes such good care of me. And I don't even have to think no more, cuz my New Mommy does it all for me: she tells me when and how to sleep - even if in the middle of the day, or after switching from Day to Night and back to Day again.

But my new Mommy says that's 'A-J okay.' The sleep experts back her up and, well, so does the wooden spatula, that my Real Mommy used only once or twice in my growing up days. Now I have that behind my behind all the time and up I get a three am, (or else)!

Now, I am so dopey from the sleeping pill/bedtime story that she forced on me and I whine:

"Oh Mommy, there are so many deer out at this time, and I am so Dopey!"

But my New Mommy says "That's A-J okay." And quotes the Hours of Service rules, And I reckon: 'Shoot, deer antlers make nice hood ornaments on my cab, anyway.' Or perhaps, I can get the Amish who did all my friends hunting trophies, to skin 'em and get some fur trading

or jerky meat in the bargain? They're not too far away in the Southern Tier of NY and I could just stick it, dripping, on the catwalk, or break the seal and stick it in my trailer, or in my cab... Ah, but wait! I am still in little girl mode and would never want to hurt *Bambi*! Oh NO!

So onward I go! It's three am and even my husband could seldom wake me at this hour, even six years in a row of every single darn night three am nookie that I wouldn't wake up for, but, alas, there is that wooden spatula my New Mommy uses. And I get up easy now!

So, I dunk down three cups of coffee - thank God for coffee. I seriously wonder if I could ever do this job without it. I should pack a 'Camel Back' that can hold hot coffee.

I note the glassy appearance of the highways, it looks cold but alas, I love ice skating; it's such *fun*, especially in a big rig, with things like Jack-knives and Rollover Beathovens, that I'd never get to do on a sunny day, like the one I'd just drugged myself to sleep through.

But anyways, I'm now all Java'd up and rolling hard. I wanna make my New Mommy proud - I want another happy face put on my lunch pale in the Pilot this week. I'm so glad I don't have to make any decisions any more - shoot, they even let the computer route me and I get an Amish tour all across the countryside, when I could just take the Ohio Turnpike!. But I just love being a kid again, and let others be in charge of this big rig. Man I just hold onto the wheel, I guess.

I just love being a kid again and treated just like one too! And to C.L. Werner, of Werner Enterprises, the *visionary* who started this all, world-wide:

*"Oh bless you for doing what could not be done -
making the most fabulous job in the world,
a heck of a lot of no fun!"*

Recap from 'Mommy Qualcomm'

Although this piece appears to be lighthearted gag on the rules, it actually came from years of *deep bitterness about these rules*. I learned after agonizing long hours how to distill it into humor. I was learning to protest, while keeping a smile, even if it was just a mischievous grin: *"Here's some more material for you guuuurl!!"* my muse was saying and I'd laugh at the more crazy it became, the funnier. The more I wanted to cry, alas there was more comedy to be found in it once you got back, got some rest and said, *I'm going kick your butt in it, instead!*

Ah, at last some rest from the zest of seeing it richly interesting from a writer's view. I could have only stayed out here so long, without being a writer; I would not have had sense to do it no more.

For I had to cry out in my laughter for which take an amazing job, for I loved to travel and to stop and see things I would never get to see normally and because these rules actually stopped me from getting a wonderful kind of reward for all my labors that just not paid for - the reward of seeing our vast and beautiful country. Now, I did get to stop - it's industry standard to get one day off per one week out. But by then I had bills, laundry, shopping, cleaning, maintenance and etcetera all piled up upon me and then, I was usually just as bushed as can be after a three thousand mile week, especially. Sometimes, a lot of times, I just had time to rest, that's it.

"Ah! But then my truck would break down, or there'd be hurricanes and floods!" Ah, now I can get my laundry done!! God, I love Hurricanes! I said, (not really, but then I was too tired to make such sense). But, I am thankful for an older truck that tends to rest my overworked self. It's five years old and, anciently wonderful, and now I got some rest. I told Short-Fuse, who then had the flexible paper logs, but a few years went by, and now he was under the electronic leash and too, never seeing faraway relatives that he loved to do, though they were close by in Chicago runs. Now he was moaning like I had, until he'd pulled apart his leash one day and, the tiniest bit over the hours he went for things like food, rest, relaxation with relatives:

If they weren't so darned reasonable we wouldn't be complaining so!!

And then I began to develop while out here, the fine art of whining, for nobody seemed to hear our voice, that we were doing a pretty darn, miraculously good job - CONSIDERING the duress we were put under caused by harsh rules and other things likes blizzards and wildy weaving cars and such.

Nobody ever asked us how we wanted to do our jobs - we the professionals, they did not ask. Who did they turn to but to Sleep Experts, psychologists, and even M.A.D.D (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) as if they knew about Trucking BETTER than us, the professionals? You get your butt out here and get your pay by the miles and You'll see!! You'll see!!! I whine on.

WE ARE THE EXPERTS OF THE LONG HAUL NOT YOU!

Our voice, our concerns are completely unheard because we have no unions, nationwide, only specialty unions for certain kinds of drivers. Not broad unions to cover us all in the concerns that all truck drivers have about things we must all have, like proper sleep.

So, no one heard and indeed no one cared. And we cried and whined about the rules to ourselves, but the general public did not hear.

I marveled that more drivers didn't protest these rules, or break down under the strain of being separated from reasonable rules and hours of service and chained down to not choose how to run a load in the day! And I marveled that the strain didn't break us down like it did postal workers, hence the saying 'Going Postal' came out in popular sayings across the nation, but did you ever hear of a truck driver blowing people away? Or running people over? Are there sayings like:

'Going Trucker-al'

'Going Semi-al'

(Nah, I guess that don't sound so good, eh?)

I think what a driver is, then, is something rather, hardworking in an old fashioned way, we are, a lot of us, prior service military, such as myself, and very patriotic: I see a lot of flags and eagles painted on our cabs and on our trailers. We tend to be Freedom lovers, because being in a truck makes you want to be free, to roll, to work hard, to be one's own boss, to be self-sufficient, to be in a profession that is dangerous and demanding, yet exhilarating of the mountaintops kind.

And that's what my brethren are, you see, not whiners, not complainers, not drifters, just high rollers, who roll hard, on into the dawn, and you don't get to know us, because we're always gone, making a buck, rolling, noble, proud, strong, honor, *than*

My brethren, roll fine,

Hammer Down!

Keep'er tween the lines,

My longhauling, rolling man!

Bambi

"Booooooooooom!"

"That", said Bambi's mother

"Was *MAN*."

Disney Feature Animation *Bambi*

And speaking of deer I have heard said: GO AHEAD AND HIT THE DEER JUMPING IN FRONT OF YOUR RIG! WELL, let's see what Green Peace would have to say about that! -- but that's exactly what we're being told to do by the Safety Departments across the nation.

Having lots of wheel time to ponder this, this is my reaction:

They should have deer meat stands everywhere, for such good meat and fur is just everywhere and going to waste! I saw at least fifty dead deer this month.

For, who wants to rollover a 80,000 pound rig on count of a forest-ratlike animal - like gulls, crows, mice, rats, bats, snakes... they're everywhere, and though Disney-cute as can be are commonplace like, well rats, and even so is a bigrig, but, then people'd get hurt and unlike other animals, they'd sue.

No Prob so far, are you following me, so far?

The problem is that with the Safety Gestapo, and, duh, *our own good common sense is to avoid hitting any living thing*, which is instilled and indwelled upon us from day one and of course, from Disney. To add to this problem is that our natural reflexes which, believe me, are well honed to avoid all those wildly weaving four wheelers constantly down the road, now have to be squelched in a split second in order to follow the Safety Rules: go ahead and hit the deer!!

And not only hit them, but hit them in the right spot! Some elk are as big as logs - shoot, I swerved for what I thought was a log in plain view on a very summery day near Portland, Oregon. My two side-angels posted on the port and starboard fenders of my rig helped me not to swerve into the other rigs, that day for what I did was outright instinct!! (I wish I knew their names to thank them and I'm not joking here.) Hitting that elk while swerving might have also toppled the load. Swerving into another truck to miss it, well, that's just plain bad.

So when you see a blitzing deer (and any deer species like the elk) go ahead and aim one of your fenders for their rear, that way their carcass will go to the middle of your grill and not just one side topple the whole dang thing over! But that way is very messy, I'm warning you.

Should I get sites put on my hood to help me with the aiming process - of lining up a deers' whitetail in my sites and then, boom hitting it in just the right spot?

And what about deer hunting season, does my rig need a permit for that, even if it is, *as it always is*, only an emergency procedure done in just about any season?

Can we get stickers to show how many Safety-Hazard Deer (SHDs) we took off the highways like the aces did in WW Two? Could CSA post this to help our safety rating that we could overcome tremendous natural instinct all in the name of Safety?

Can we get some training on a simulator to change our hardened instincts to avoid Bambi into one of straight forward slaughter?

And it seldom happens that way. I was sitting in my company one time doing log corrections and I could hear the Safety Review Board going over a jack knife case about a deer.

I took a peep to see what kind of folk were in on this board, to get a gander of the mercy-level content of the group: One manager and five middle-aged ladies from the log and payroll departments: none of them drivers!!

"Oh, he swerved to avoid a deer!" they said, unmercifully zapping the poor driver's career just like that, and now he has a jack-knife on his record, and no job while the deer he missed, got nothing! But alas, dear Bambi lives on!

The Safety Nazis - The Gestapo

Young unmerciful dispatchers - See Digital Recording
How Canadian searched my truck in both _____ and Coutts/Sweetgrass
Montana - taking out alligator sized aquariums.

& The Wild West

This whole continent this America of ours is so vast and so splendid, it encompasses just about every climate from the Tropics to the Tundra and every flavor from the Puritans, Quakers and Amish to the Salsa of New Mexico and I never ceased to enjoy every part of the country for its own merits, the rolling Shenandoah, the lush New England, the panoramic West, the cliffs and coves and rainforests of the Pacific Northwest.

I loved the long, empty roads, because they were open and vast and I remembered the many legends that I had read of as a teen, of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, of the great gold rush and the wild west,

As I changed address to California, I began to see more and more historic old west and slowly, especially on accounts like Sears, I began to really see the Wild West, Like Tombstone and Deadwood

Ghost Towns/ Wild West: Tombstone, Deadwood, Calico, Thermopolis, WY,
Cody, WY Circleville, UT (Butch Cassidy)
Spent the night in the RV section of Calico - the Cemetery!!

Convoy

Having worked with scientists at the Fleet's Computer Weather Center, I was exposed to a great deal of meteorological 'models' for forecasting; and having a year long hauling under my skin I had a great deal of weather theories myself, that, in this case came exactly as I predicted. This one was, if there are a lot of hurricanes on the Continental US, that there will be a mild winter. And my first year of trucking, 2005 was the horrific year of Katrina, Rita, (that hit Pensacola). When I got my trips to cross into the Canadian Border, I was thus verified that, even up in Edmonton, there were snow flurries and that was it and I told myself, "Watch out for next year Mare!!"

Well the next winter (and the next few without major hurricanes) came, and just as I thought, they were NOT mild winters, and I told Short Fuse that I need to educate myself on Winter. And I couldn't talk to him north of the border for it was two dollars a minute.

As I left Edmonton I could just feel it was about to downburst on me and I got right on the CB and got myself another driver escort down to the border at Sweetgrass, Montana. As we drove through Red Deer it hit us and I crossed the border by myself. I must have took a break on the boarder and drove two hours alone and pulled up to the Flying J in Great Falls, Montana.

I didn't need fuel. I needed company and boldly I pulled right into the fuel bay and asked the driver next to me: "Hey! Are you driving in this?"

"Yeah, we're a team, we gonna have to."

And he leaned over to this guy pumping on the other side of him the next aisle over. "Hey! You gonna go in this?"

"Yeah, shoot we gotta be in Houston in two days."

"Hey, that's where were going."

"I'm going to Denver." I told them. It was on their way.

"Lets all go together." The other said.

"Shoot, why not. "

"Where you going, Driver?" they asked me.

"I've got to make Cheyenne. I'm a rookie driver from sunny California. I need some company out here. It's coming down good!"

Others heard us chatting and queued up with us at The Fly.

So we all pulled up off the fuel aise and waited. We all got munchies and coffee. "Just a minute ma'am, we have to log all this." And he was on his steering wheel drawing his little tedious log lines that I didn't have to do.

"I know, I have electronic logs."

Thus getting their logs all caught up to date – the first guy I talked to, Dale, took the lead out of the Fly and the other one behind me, and hearing all talking on the CB we quickly gathered up two other flatbed trucks pulling lumber – all teams – that didn't want to go alone in the blizzard. And out the truckstop we went.

Rubber Duck, we got us a CON-VOY!

I lost Dale right away in all the snow, "Hey where did you go, Dale?" I CB'd "Oh there you are, that's an excellent idea." He had turned on his 'Utility Light' the light that goes on the back of the

tractor's back bulkhead, for his trailer lights were already jammed with snow and blocked. If it hadn't have been for that light and his steady voice over the CB I would never have known he was even there for the rest of the trip! But his voice came through, strong and steady and as I got to know Dale and Jeff behind me and the two other drivers, Scott and Eric, and I found myself with the most experienced, elite drivers I had ever met to that date. We didn't even use CB handles that night.

They were all at least fourteen years experience – except for one, by the name of Scott, who only had eight years – he was the least experienced – except for me who had twelve months! And as we proceeded the storm became heavier and heavier – I never would have done this alone, nor have I since. But Dale and Jeff they did it all the time, these guys, for they had the best pay, the best long loads – bringing oil drilling equipment from Houston to Edmonton and back, and they drove the four thousand mile round trip back to back and then they had a week off!! The flatbed lumber guys were also going somewhere deep in Texas as well and were all well paid – they told me! So they didn't stop for a silly thing like a blizzard in the mountains of Montana – not when you're getting paid like they were!!

And they were all gentleman to me. This was something I was to find out time and time again, that the worst weather brought out the best men, and thus, sometimes great storms were a time of great comradeship and journies together, pulling for each other, helping each other. And they were all so helpful to me as a rookie female driver, I indeed even felt a bit special to be out here with these tall guys in a blizzard in the Outback of Montana.

And they were all married. I think that's a neat thing that marriage does for a man, it tames him and makes him more civilized and decent. And after that, if a guy was too decent, I often knew, without asking, that he was a married man. But not all, my two good friends of many years Short-Fuse and Jimmy Mac were decent guys, albeit more colorful than most married gents!

And now we were getting off the interstate to take the cut-off from really getting bogged down in the winding gorges around Butte, Helena and ... This was a road I would never take in a blizzard at night, nor by myself in winter, but we did it, because we had each other. And the snow was coming down now in a heavy goose down kind of snow and the snowbanks were up to the tops of our windows and we were now driving on pack snow of at least a foot in depth. But we kept talking, for we had each other, and more trucks joined our little convoy that night, and I got to know them all.

I had the opportunity to take that road again in summer in the day and after seeing miles and miles of backcountry turns and no towns, I marvel that we did that in the heaviest storm, for there was no pat on the back, not for me at least, to pull a rig through an epic snow storm on such a backcountry road in winter, no reward. But, like I said, we had each other. And this is the shortest route to Houston this back butte country road!

And we talked and talked. I probed each one of them for tricks, tips and strategies for truck driving and I got one heck of an education that night for hours and hours of the bleakest tedious driving you can imagine. I mimicked their driving style – how they handled different bluffs – that is when I could actually see them, for most of the journey that night, we were just voices hanging together in the night, for I could see just about nothing that night!!

And then Dale led us in _____ we stopped and all had coffee – just pulling right into a gas station and not even parking the snow was so deep. And we scooped out our back trailer tale lights out and scooped out underneath and they all switched out drivers and I went the rest of the way with a second set of very decent, helpful drivers through the night and down onto I – 80 and I -** that drops

into Cheyenne. And it was the same thing, decent, careful, family men, breaking their backs to get through a blizzard to get on home, bring in the bacon and support their families! Wow!

At the 'Port of Entry' – the scale house in Cheyenne, we all got out again and I was saying bye – for being a solo driver I had just about ran out of hours on that back blizzard, and they were going to keep on going for they were all team drivers – straight on to Texas without stop! The Texas Express!! And they left me there, the Convoy did, but with a most wonderful experience of what comradeship can give you – courage to surmount a most terrifying storm. And that's what I had with my friends out here on the road, comradeship like no other job. And winters were never so scary after that.

Dresses on beers and Hoolah-Hoops in Hooters

"Stop caring so much what people think!" Short-Fuse, in mentor mode again, was teaching me. He was and is my mentor and the very guy who pushed me to write all this down, and strengthened me the many miles, and alas, I always enjoyed very much to do things for him, for he'd helped me so very much in the many years.

And Short-Fuse liked going into Hooters, though I wasn't too keen on it, it was like going to a strip club in my mind. I felt I didn't belong there. But, then, I felt I owed him one – or two – or perhaps three thousand favors.

"Look, I don't go in there for the strip club scene either – what I like is to be taken care of; I like all the attention."

"Well, I admire that you're straight up front about it." And I agreed to go there. "Alllllllwright." We'd both parked in the TA in Albuquerque, NM, where we had showers and put on nice clothes. We did not look like the hardscrabble truck drivers that we were. And he bobtailed us to Hooters a few miles away.

We got a table. I was very self-conscious and couldn't look around but orange and white colored Hooter napkins were boring to stare at. But he said "Look, Mare, there's family everywhere."

I ventured a peep around. "Oh yeah, you're right." There were kids and families, and to my satisfaction, a lot of men in there as well. Maybe this wasn't such a 'din of iniquity' after all and I began to relax a bit.

"May I take your order?" an attractive Hispanic waitress named Marie. I got Cajun chicken strips and a Diet Coke."

"And you, sir?"

"Lobster Legs and a MGD."

"Okay..."she said scribbling.

"And I want my beer with a dress on it."

Both Marie and I choked up in laughter. "That's Funny!"

"Hey, I'm being serious." He glanced at us both. "Haven't you ever dressed up a beer before, Marie?"

"No, sir." She said, still giggling a bit.

"I want the rim with lime and salt and you wrap a napkin around the beer like a skirt."

She just looked at him.

"Bring it out and I'll show you how."

When his MGD arrived on a platter he grabbed it and did some Origami folds with his napkin and fitted it around the MGD's waist like a skirt.

"How pretty." I teased.

"Got it, Marie." The instructor asked her.

"Yessir." She said, but I could see doubt in her eyes.

"Hey, Marie, I want my Diet Coke with a skirt on it too!" And she laughed at my teasing. "My friend and I here wanna play dollies, tonight."

"AT EASE you two." He said. And she left laughing. He lifted his beer up. "See, it has a skirt."

"So what."

"I like to have my beer dressed up. I like to *feel taken care of.*"

"Well if napkins on a bottle make you feel so good, well, I'm really happy for you."

"You've never seen this done? Everyone does this in Texas."

"This ain't Texas, Short-Fuse."

I was happy. He always, always made me laugh. I always felt safe around him to be myself and I pointed out that I seemed to be getting along pretty good in here.

"You know, Short-Fuse, I thought I'd be intimidated by all the beautiful girls in here. But I seem to be getting along alright."

"Yeah, and I noticed you're getting better service than I am - *more attention.*"

"I am??"

"Yeah, just watch."

Marie came back to our table a few minutes late with our entre. It was true she responded more to me than him, despite the fact that he was and is very handsome and charming as can be.

"You're right, Short-Fuse, she was more at ease with me." I said when she left.

I pondered that. Was I motherly to her at age 45? Was I more relaxed because I wasn't on the take, on the prowl, like a man? Or was it because they actually respected me because of my age? I think it was a little of all of that and it was nice to not be intimidated - I had grown up in California with a lot of attitude from girls like Marie, but perhaps outside the sphere of Hollywood - in New Mexico, it was a different story - and I was one to be listening.

We relaxed quite a bit in there. He was teaching me all about football and a game was on, and then came the UFC fights that I was starting to enjoy so much, and the constant rattling of the road and danger wore off and we were having a fine and excellent time.

"I'm having a splendid time." I didn't even drink.

"You see, you gotta stop caring what people think."

"You're right Short Fuse! You're right!"

Then I saw the Hoolah-hoops behind the counter. "I bet they're safety equipment." He joked

"Hey, what are the hoolah hoops for Marie?" I asked when she came back to our table.

She giggled "Well, we sometimes we do them for fun."

"Oh, I've always wanted to do them for exercise but I've never figured out how." I was always thinking of my waistline - even while eating.

"Come on, Mary." She grabbed me and she went up the counter and got two hoops out. And we put them around our waists in the middle of a packed Hooters.

She was gyrating her tiny hips and the hoop went round and round like a drive wheel and she was instructing how to gyrate the hips just right and now my hoop was going round and round as well. It was not easy, but since there was no stress - no one seemed to be watching me - in the packed Hooters - I tried it some more.

"Hey Marie! I'm doing it! I've never done it before!! Never!!"

"There you go girl!" and we were hooping together like two school girls on a playground.

"Hey Short-Fuse!" I called across the room loudly.

We were both hooping now good.

"Hey Short-Fuse! Look!"

He now seemed to be studying the napkins very well; perhaps he wanted to do some more origami??

"Hey Short-Fuse, you said not to care what people think!" I hollered out across the room.

"I don't know her." He said to our neighbors red as can be. He put his head in his hand for a marine split second.

"Hey, this is great! Hey! I'm going to tip you good, Marie." Then I was giving the hoop back to my laughing waitress buddy, Marie. My friend was beet red and looking down at the napkins laughing.

"You said not to care what people think!"

"And you did well." I noticed that though he was keenly red in the face, he was somehow still in teaching mode.

That night his observation had freed me: that I was likeable for who I was, not for what I looked like to them. I think it rather changed my life for the better, and over the years the numbers of

Hooters we met at: San Antonio, Virginia Beach, Birmingham, etc.
He'd taught me to give a darn what people think, a blessing I bet.

But, I'll always cherish this road collectable of my charming, daring, brash, 'Former-Active' Marine friend, studying the napkins in intimate detail.

Comments People Make

"I couldn't do that"

Is the top comment I get from women other than: **"Aren't you scared?"**
"But we get several months of training." I always say back. And now as I write this particular segment in Bangor, Maine's "Sea Dog" I muse that driving the itzy little Focus I rented for this vacation makes me feel little, unimportant and Jostled, I begin to miss that big ole thang, my rig - Daryl. Do I need decompression after going from the rig to the Focus and back? Could I get the bends? Should I rent a Benz next time?

"It's too big"

Many say this... and 'No', I say back - 'your car is too small'. You get used to being up high - the incredible vantage of seeing is wonderful. You have six to eight huge mirrors - the West Coasts mirrors, the baby convex mirrors, the nose mirrors the door mirror. I never thought I'd say this because when I was a rookie years ago, I would start sweating on the off-ramp at the idea of having to back up, but now, given enough space, I can back my truck easier than I can my car. It's all geometry: the set up the swing, parallel lines and swivel and pivot. It's FUN!!!

It's fun in the same way when you shoot a basketball Into the hoop - and for me, now after many years, I can really'd put the 53 footer in the hole easier than I can shoot a basketball into the net - Ah, but then, I am a *Whaaaht Gurl*.

"Aren't you scared?"

Oh, yeah, I don't like Ice. It's my top contender for this spot. Also, I don't like spending the night behind a store in a dark dock for a four am appointment. But mostly I am afraid of a "false hurry" where because of electronic logs you hustle so much that you get quite tired and frazzled. And why? To hurry up to go to sleep (line 2) before the logs run out and the Boogie man gets you. Literally 'Hurry up and Sleep'.

There was a bump once in the middle of the night when I had backed up to an Idaho forest on the rural Idaho US 95, leaving British

Columbia. "A Bear is scratching his butt on your trailer!" my friend the Mac Man kidded me.

"Hey!" I was like Tom Hanks in his role on 'Cast Away' yelling at cocoanuts and volleyballs. But when it happened again in a big truck stop in Atlanta I asked Short Fuse. "Oh, that's your air letting out of your air bag suspension!"

"Well, I suppose there's no Grizzly Bears in Atlanta, anyways."

And, then, there are the drop yards in the Dead of the Night! I don't know if anyone knows this, but these trailers make a bunch of settling noises ALL NIGHT LONG. So if you in the back of a VERY DARK drop yard at 3 AM (courtesy of electronic logs) with a flashlight, tripping in the trash, mud, weeds and dump behind the backs of the trailers, looking for an empty trailer and having to open every door that doesn't have a seal on it to make sure, well, you start hearing things. It's creepy and you gotta do it because of electronic logs not allowing you to pick reasonable and decent hours of doing things in the clear of the day!!

Naming Places

Other than the Male Ego and Endless Rules and Regulations, another aspect of trucking that never ceased to amuse me - no! Drive me to the deck in laughter - was the naming of places all over

Yes, this includes you too, you Canadians... of "Drumbo" and "Kipperling" and "Moose Jaw" You're not getting off Scott-free!

But first let me talk of the colorful mountain passes that we crossed (these are the ones I went down): of the winding Grapevine and Cabbage, Cajon (Drawer), Dead Man's Pass, Three Sisters, Tehachapi, Snoqualmie, Sherman (where a huge statue of Lincoln, not Sherman, stands right on the Pass), Elk - with hurricane force winds all winter, British Colombia's Coquihalla, BC/Alberta's: Crow's Nest Pass, Radium, Jasper Pass, Banff, Colorado's Eisenhower/Vale, Fancy Gap and Chattanooga's drop. Been down 'em all many, many times!

Each pass I can tell a story about - especially in winter - each pass summons strength and endurance to hold 'er between the lines, and course courage to not fail when the icy road drops off two thousand feet, or chain up over Vail. God Bless us!! Who else would do this job?

To town names:

The Well-known, Mother of all hysterical names, comes from - of all things - the Amish town of "Intercourse", Pennsylvania - north east of Lancaster and York, PA. And, I heard of Fertility, PA.

Intercourse, PA is 300 miles due east of Michigan's "Climax" located 20 miles due east of Sprinkles Road, No Kidding! Of course, Michigan has also 'Kalamazoo' and "Paw Paw".

How can you expect me to sit up and drive safe when my belly cramps in howls with laughter at these town names!

These are all true, I tell you, look them up on the map; they are UNBELIEVE-A-BULL:

"Mule Shoe" Texas.

"Chunky", Mississippi. Put that on your resume!! It's near the Chunky River

"Love Ladies" New Jersey. No, no way!

"Seaman" Alabama.

Dry Gulch, USA, OK (just in case you confuse it with Dry Gulch, USA, Mongolia) in Oklahoma

Throckmorton" Texas

Thurber and Mingus, Texas

Boracho Station, Texas

- In Spanish "Drunken Station" (I-10 Exit 166) of course the Gringos don't know it

Weed, Calif

Social Circle, PA

Show Low, AZ (A town won in a poker game by showing low)

Buttzville, NJ

Greasy, OK

Worcester, MA (Wooster)

Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ

Netcong, NJ

Hopatcong, NJ

Qwimillbury, ON

Well, at least it beats the interminable pretty naming schemes: "River View, Mountain View, Mountain Brook, Woodhaven, Woodland, Woodlawn, Woodbridge, Maywood...

Pretty? Pretty Boring!!

Of course, I found Indian names could be - eh, to be politically correct, 'stimulating':

Mehoopany, in PA (I actually choked when someone directed me to this town where Proctor and Gamble sit)

Whippany (Whip-Pawn-Nee)

Netcong

Tunkhannock (To Can it)

Kissimmee

Got weird names? Blame it on the Injuns, er - I mean Indians, er, I mean Native Americans, of course!

'Where are ya today, Mare?"

"Il-OhIowa."

(I like combining up my own names up after: Texarkana, Texoma, Mexicali, Calexico).

And there were place names that seemed so opposite to other:

Liberal, Kansas

Morocco, Kokomo, Mexico, Peru, Indiana

And many named after Christian themes: Bethlehem, PA, Sacramento, Calif - and a host of saints, santa, sans and St.s. Having Christianity as a main religion I found it intriguing why there were so many names not from The Holy Land, but adjacent 'gentile' lands like: Lebanon, Cairo, Hebron, Palestine, Goshen, Memphis, etc. It seems just about every state has a Lebanon in it. And in New Mexico this name is pronounced: LeBANon.

And, I just gotta fit this one in, in Germany, where I once lived, there really was a township by the name of "Fikkenmulen" - literally to have sex with Garbage. When I asked a German lady, who lived near there, I knew she uttered a bit tight lipped: "It's just a name."

Well, it's all 'just a name', America, even Intercourse, PA! 'Sticks and Stones won't break my bones, y'know, but will silly-names drive you minging?

Well, they say that these names are picked from the early settlers and hunters and trappers, like well Jim Bridger who discovered the Great Salt Lake who got Ft. Bridger, WY for all his trouble. Was there a James Drumbo? A Marylyn Love Ladies? A John Muleshoe? A Milford Chunky?

Did you have to have a weird name to be a settler/early hunter-trapper? How did Lewis and Clark ever make it across America with such ordinary names? Probably Sacajawea helped.

Nick naming Trucks

SWIFT - Slow while in the Fast Lane

Werner - We employ Rookies, No Experience Required

CRST - "Crusty"

NEMF - Nymph-O

Freightliner - "Freight Shaker" oh yes! Totally!

& The Ships I saw

Ships: USS Midway, USS Lexington, SS Lane Victory, USS Alabama, USS Wisconsin (In Norfolk Virginia), USS Constellation I in Baltimore and USS Constellation CVA 64 in Bremerton, WA and many ships there.

Bivouacked in Fort Jackson, SC on base delivering military gear, there.

Numbers and Trucking

'Ya gotta write 'em all down' were my trainers words echoing to me, because in a heavy rainstorm you can't get numbers twisted in your head as you're twisting down the highway: Here's actual directions to a spot in Hamilton, Ohio:

Take US 26 ten miles
To US 119
To the OH 126 briefly
To the OH 127
To the 129/127 5 miles becomes the OH 122
Get off on 2nd street
Go four Blocks the 3rd ave
It's on the right hand side,
1026 29th street

As if all that wasn't confusing, this is how the above set of directions come aboard your Qualcomm screen - Without a single darn comma! What do commas cost more from Qualcomma?? Here is it, don't even try to read it!

TAKE US 26 TEN MILES TO US 119 TO THE OH 126 BRIEFLY TO THE OH 127
TO THE 129/127 5 MILES BECOMES THE OH 122 GET OFF ON 2ND STREET GO FOUR
BLOCKS THE 3RD AVE RHS 1026 29TH STREET

After you enter about ten other sets of numbers for you load number, trailer number, truck number, receiver phone number, pick up number, shipper number, etc number... there are many different macro numbers to enter this all in.

And remember you are known by your truck number, so don't forget your name, Mary Seeker is "Truck 5642627." Now try driving the big rig in the rugged Southwestern Ohio countryside in a rain storm..

That's Trucking!

Part II Mountains

Across on the Great Divide

I got volunteered to do several different accounts for my company over the years I was on it and I experienced many different regions and types of loads from Texas and Oklahoma, to New England, Maine and Virginia. I even went to Kitty Hawk, NC on the outer banks. And one of the nicest things is that you actually got to go into this little downtowns all around 'Main Street America' and deliver into them, whereas in strict 48 states over the road you saw a lot of distribution centers and truckstops, few towns, unless your route took you through them. On these accounts you got to know your people you delivered to and you got to know your fellow drivers and they were pretty helpful and comradely as we'd meet in the DC. We had barbeques and went shopping, played football and relaxed. It was really much better than the OTR I had been doing all by myself for years.

One of the best accounts yet was delivering to Sears stores appliances, which I wouldn't have thought so, but many Sears stores are in big nice malls – you never go into any hole, and you get to go 'mall' while they unload you. Malls are very easy to find too. Or, they had small Sears stores in splendid little towns or retirement communities all across America. And as people were seeking the desert to retire in, I saw the back country of the Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado, places like 'Show Low, Arizona, Fort Huachuca, AZ, Payson, Prescott, Flagstaff and many others.

But only one thing perplexed me, was that all the Sears loads were "Just – In – Time" loads (JIT Loads) which I always call: "Not Enough Time" loads (NET Loads) especially in the Rockies. Any kind of 'hiccup' like a snow storm could slow you down and that meant late loads and stress. I had always, always hated to be rushed and then lectured to again and again and again about being safe! The two are mutually exclusive – they do not exist together! And for many years I wailed to Short Fuse about 'False Hurry' created by such things and false stress and fake worry, all due to things like electronic logs, and unmerciful dispatch practices like JIT loads, where you drove all the time in a worry/ hurry/ fliry – I called a 'whorrry'. As the years passed and I began to disregard appointment times with a vengeance for someone who had been in the Navy and wouldn't be UA (Unauthorized Absence, kinda like AWOL, or just plain LATE) for the world!! I got scared if I was late, because people got mad, but. The important thing is that relaxed unhurried driving is not only healthier, but SAFER too, and once I slowed down, the tickets stopped coming!! And I became less aggravated by stupid rules and stupid appointment times like to get over a mountain pass of the Rocky Mountains caliber in only ninety minutes:

When I got my dispatch for that day it was all across historic Colorado, from Durango, to Alamosa to Pagosa Springs and I carefully trip planned each stop. But it was going slow and I looked at my next stop – it was only ninety miles away and, once I was unloaded, low, they had given me ninety minutes to do it in! I looked at the map, it was rather green in that area, indicating mountains, and I felt I just wouldn't be able to do this quickly, so I sent them a late macro.

I got back a sarcastic reply, something like this “You have enough time!” and the infamous battering ram of a message: “Keep the load moving” or something of that gists. *O ye young ones of dispatch*, I thought. And put her on the road.

Well the road gave me a dramatic turn as she arose and arose and arose amongst the most beautiful country one could imagine, waterfalls and forests, grand panoramic heights and drops, twisting and winding slalom of a road. ‘My! Ain’t this perty!’ a song was going through my head as I followed it up to the very top – ninety minutes had expired long ago, and, SHOOOOT, I had forgotten all about JIT and NET loads for I wasn’t on a modern day delivery, but an epic climb, a sojourn, an immigrant going over a dangerous, high mountain pass in a Conestoga wagon, and as I came to the top of the pass – in snow, NO! IN GLACIERS!! A sign said, 12,000 the highest I’d ever been in a truck yet and I looked - I was on the top of the mountain, what mountain was this anyway? And I looked:

“Wolf Creek Pass”

I wondered why that was so familiar to me, But that shot out of my mind for now I was going *Downhill on the other side of the pass*. Now this was another story! Down shift her down –*all the way down! Lads---* and hold her to the ground!! I went round and round and I came upon forest and drops and then one long hellacious grade – even steeper than Vale or Ol’ Cabbage herself, and I looked there was dear Smokey sitting on that segment of road.

And I remembered where this was familiar to me, that some truckstop cashier had told me in a truckstop somewhere that “Smokey sits on that pass at all times and all days – 24/7.”, and Smokey’s cherries went a whirling as I passed, he was getting some youngster in a car for speeding. “Because,” the clerk was saying in my memory “Not one year goes by that someone doesn’t crash on this pass.”

“Woe, and they wanted me to get through that pass to Pagosas Springs in ninety minutes!!!!”

Slowing down even more I could start to see the little retiree community slowly come into my windscreen, and as I took the last rollercoaster drop, they were saying in my memory: “Yeah, this pass is so dangerous that someone wrote a country music song about it.”

“What song?” I said holding her on a steep curve that dropped off several thousand feet.

“...because, not one year goes by that someone *doesn’t crash and DIE on this pass*.”

Wow, so this is that pass! I exclaimed as I went down it. To the dispatchers at Sears it was just another segment between two stops, but to us, it was:

Across the Great Divide!

Now, Pagosas Springs, your retirees are gonna hafta wait a few minutes more for their frigs and their washin’ ma-chines!! Cuz I got a pass to get ’er down!!

And with those words reverbing through my head as I took the last avalanche of a drop down— Ah!! I remembered the song now!! It was by the same guy as *Convoy* iconic trucking songs, that had a great cultural influence on our brotherhood:

Wolf Creek Pass!

Way upon the Great Divide!

Truckin’ on Down

The other side!!

Sears got their appliances late and were grumbling - but - I was glad to survive.

Lake Louis

My very first memory I have is of Lake Louis. She is a most spectacular lake at the bottom of a glacier in the Canadian Rockies straddling both provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. I remember simply the aqua, see-through water (Like my Nana's pool I swam in) and a cascade of mountains above it. I also remember a tiny red, lighter-shaped flashlight that I was playing with at the time, but I suppose that's not very interesting to this story. I was two when I went there and forty-three years later I drove by that highway many a time dreaming at just taking a peep at the lake again.

But of course I never had any electronical time to do so. I'd always have to hustle up the Rockies so I can get past Calgary traffic and onto Edmonton, Red Deer or Calgary deliveries. The economy was just beginning to boom way up there due to the oil sands, so I began to go there a lot. It was seldom under fifteen hundred mile journey from wherever I was. But I never seemed to have time! Thank you electronic logs for taking away a nonmonetary award I had for driving!

But alas, one day, after years of bypassing the exit, the roads were clear and I actually had time and I pulled the rig in the RV parking and left a note on the windshield, as I usually do: BRB, Not staying over night!

And I went into a bike shop and rented a bicycle – there were no taxis, to take me over the initial ridge and onto the lake. And oh! What a steep bike ride that was! It was four miles straight up a mountain with cars flying past me (as they always do) as if they were in rush hour in LA.

When I got up there I could hardly breathe such was the shock of my workout and my legs were drunken underneath me, but I was actually doing it!! I was actually about to see the lake from my earliest childhood- I was revisiting myself at age two. How often does one get to return to a very early childhood memory?

I got behind a large Pakistani family, now slowly walking my rented bike, slowly, slowly we were coming around bends together when suddenly the lake appeared before us IN ALL ITS GLORY all and they all suddenly broke out in singing -- and my spirit was shaken from within my body!

It was like looking at the altar and court of my most Holy Father – his divine Cathedral he built!! Before me was the altar and organ upon the glacier that arose thousands of feet above an aquamarine jewel of the lake beneath them. And little girl, still, I cry as I write this, how magnificent He built it, how wonderful that I could finally see it after years of patient waiting!! He built this within his rocks and mountains, but for men to see his magnificence plainly before them!!

I had travelled much, but no Cathedrals in Bavaria were as grand as this, and to the Grand Mosques of Cairo, Istanbul and Jerusalem, but no church, no castle, no palace, no pyramids, no place was more majestic, and a place of wonder to worship.

Thank you for showing me your altar that day! And to those who seek to believe, I say, visit Lake Louis!!

&Niagara Falls, Grand Canyon, Bangor

We truck drivers do have another, rather fanciful reward, we can take a hometime in any place in America where we have 1. A load or customer 2. A place to park

From that point on I was able to book myself to see things most truckers do not, like the grand Canyon...

Spain

I got a notion to visit a guy I knew who is in the US Navy as I had been and over the years had been stationed various exotic places and now was in Spain and had invited me there. I bought my tickets online for, I kid you not, \$500 dollars round trip and put in my hometime request for our terminal in Atlanta, where I could park the rig and then fly out.

I was in Charleston, South Carolina when I got a fabulous load to California. I had two weeks, maybe, before my trip out to Spain. I was now in a dilemma, and thought of calling Scott with, 'Hey, I'm loving this load, but can you get me back across to Georgia in time?'

But, I thought, I'll just keep a watch on loads and stay on top of them - I didn't want to loose the trips, they were just too good to be believed - it would be six thousand miles all for me for Espana!!

And, I wanted to be trim when I arrived in Madrid, but, now with two cross country loads ahead of me, shapping up would be kind of hard. But I went on the Atkins Diet at 176 pounds !!!! And proceeded across the country.

I ran that trip hard on I-20 all the way to Pecos, Texas, jumped on the ten, I was logging over 650 miles per day! And I was eating tuna - oh, god, was I eating tuna! I hate tuna, but it seemed to be working, by the time I hit Cali I had dropped to 170. It was a start. I had been seven days on this run.

So I put my load in, visited the Mom briefly and a day point five went by I got a set of fresh new set of 70 hours back and got another great load - to Laredo, Texas on the Rio Grande - where loads from the industrial Monterrey, Mexico always criss-crossed America, and loads could be great for my purpose of getting back to Atlanta in time.

But to make sure I messaged them en route to let them know that I had a an international flight awaiting me in one week and could they just get me a tidge closer immediately. And though this terminal was the most customer service oriented (I knew the terminal manager, for instance) it was one of those days where the balance of trade was just not there for Atlanta, and I sat anxiously in Laredo for Four days awaiting a load, constantly urging the excellent load planners there, who quietly assured me that I'd get that load to Atlanta - and not else where and then really have to wonder.

Meanwhile, I now had a chance to work out, so I ran for those four days. I got on the Terminal Manager's scale - it said 165 NOW!

I finally left Laredo for the long congested trip to Atlanta- with fresh hours, still doggedly eating the sawdust they call tuna. I had been eating tuna for two weeks straight!

I had to drop and hook in Alabama, and get on another load to Atlanta, popped into the pilot to see my boy there near Birmingham. He drives like a maniac, we go out to eat - I have steak - it's on the Atkins diet. We go to a Walmart to find a scale. It says 162!!

The day before my flight is to leave I get my load to Atlanta all loaded and scaled out and trucking down the road. I pull into the terminal and drop it there and collapse in the rack. I've just been across the country twice. I get up very early the next day to get ready to go. I'm nervous about all the new rules for travel since 911. I get all my stuff done, down to the line. I jump once more on the scale in the recruiting office of my company – it said 160 pounds! I had made my goal. I got into the tightest jeans I could stuff Mare into and boarded my flight to Madrid. Having arrived there I got a second flight to Andulucia to my sailor. I h got a taxi to Hartford Airport ad travelled, drove 6000 miles and flown 8000 to Europe all in three weeks and had dropped sixteen pounds as I drove.

Who said that the Atkins doesn't work. If I could drive all that and loose weight, it couldn't have been exercise a factor. My vision also cleared up. Also, I had eaten so much tuna I was developing scales on my skin! And, I felt great!!

And, Oh, what a country! Everyone should see Spain! I had dreamed of that as a child and my friend was really hospitable to let me come there. It was one of the rare things in life, but Spain was more wonderful than I had expected. But it was a very tiring month all that travel. Once I'd flown back I had logged, by truck, jet, train, taxi, car and bus over 22 thousand miles! And I had left 16 pounds somewhere down that road!

Part II Weather and the Trucker

Fuel ices up as I drive,
Windshield ices up as I drive
All my friends in the same storm system, Coast to Coast
Short Fuse trapped under an overpass
700 miles of Blizzard
Setting brakes and rig slipping down road as I parked
Going over Raton Pass, NM

People wonder how we make it through these storms, and I wondered to, until a fuller understanding came with that we are MOVING targets and, even storms have trouble keeping up with us. Sounds conceited? No, because if you just get a grip on your wheel and of course, yourself, you can drive through most storms within an hour or two and then, you're done and can drive through the wonderfully fresh and sweet air behind a cold front. It was a nice realization that they weren't all that big if you kept moving through them, unless of course you were moving along in the storm track, and I have crossed the country, west to east with some storms (luckily that they were just rain) and thought, well, this is never going to end. I'd just get ahead and into clear air and a stop for coffee put me back in rain. Now if you were waiting around and got a foot of snow dumped on you, well, that was a different story - as I am writing this after a Nor'Easter hit Harrisburg, PA (Which had just suffered an epic flood of the Susquehanna) and here I felt the storms impact more than if I had been rolling.

Also, I had far less troubles with tornadic weather, than I had living in Alabama, where I had been through many tornados. Part of this was due to the fact that trucking companies keep drivers away from their hometimes regions, unless on hometimes, fearing if we get too close to home we'll up and quit (and that I had done) and so I drove in the tornadic south than I did up north. In fact, I had been to Pennsylvania hundreds of times. It was the most driven state I had before I went west.

But I still think that being a moving target, statistically keeps us away from tornados too. I can remember being fully loaded and not being able to keep her between the lines and that storm had been far away - and an F5 tornado! After I went through it though, I realized that I seldom went through such storms.

Gradiant Winds, as we called them in the Navy, were more of a force to reckon with, as they were more widespread than tornados and thus statistically had more a chance to affect us. Gradiant winds were the winds generated between a High and Low Pressure air masses and the tighter the two masses were jammed together, the faster the winds blew, and I can remember my first trip across Elk in Wyoming, where with only 'Five in the box' loaded with five thousand pounds and thus 'Light' compared to 45,000 pounds, I had trouble keeping the trailer upright. Once up in the Elk I felt her tip over and, thank God bounce back down!! "Short Fuse I'm two wheelingigngnig now!!"

And indeed, continentally, that pass is the windiest and roughest I've ever seen!!

But there are some storms systems that are so gigantic, and you'll hear about this in advance and can hunker down through them. If you can't get through a storm within a few hours, you know then that you are facing an epic storm, and a battle as you make you way into it. And these storms are so epic and gigantic that they are entities in themselves not to be fooled with.

And that is what happened to me one year, that I call the 'Continental Storm Fest of 2010' and even emblazoned the deep layers of dirt and salt on my white Cascadia with this, for it was a North American event, and all my truck driver friends I knew *nationwide* were in it! Short Fuse was stuck under a bridge in Iowa

Part III Dangers out there

Tall Tales in the Truck stops

As I writer I marveled at the stories - the fiction - being written out in the streets to get me to part with my very, very hard

earned buck. It looks easy holding the wheel, but by God, it is exceedingly hard, long work and the road really rattles you tremendously and when you get done driving everything is so costly - cell phones, food and the even want to charge you for the air you breathe! It was called Idle Aire, but I prefer zero dollars an hour as compared to two dollars an hour for their air, for my air is warm inside my truck as well. Why should it not be - for this is also my workplace as well? I must be comfortable also to be safe. So why should I pay for that as well? And, of course, last time I checked air was still free to breathe?

So I liked giving very hard earned buck to a good cause, but what I found were other story tellers, like myself:

"I am an artist." The man was telling me. I had rolled down my window to make sure I could see the pitch-black hole I was backing into as clear as possible and I was doing so at four am (courtesy of electronic logs) in the Dallas Fly.

I had done many, many thousands of backs by now, and hadn't had a mishap yet, but opening my window up, allows the drug addicts who work the stops access: they want to 'help' me back in - which I can do all by myself thank you very much - and of course, they want to get paid for their services, too. I blisteringly ignore their twirling little fingers - as if they knew how to turn a steering wheel to swing her in the hole. It takes a lot of training to know how to do that. They are condescending that I need him because I am a woman. And, I try to not get angry that, now, because they are there, they are a distraction - I now have another target to avoid hitting! Trucking gives a driver plenty of opportunity to sharpen your getting-ticked-off skills. I've gotten quite good at it, too.

But this one having a line of 'work' sort of similar to mine - I'm kind of inclined towards the artful use of words, at times - and this distracted me for the split second it takes for a beggar to size you up and jump on your running board as your backing into a hole.

"Oh, yeah, I'm a drawer. I draw pictures."

I look at him from objectively from 12 inches away. Most artists have a sort of moody disposition and do not find themselves awake before dawn or noon even, let alone four am, unless of course they are under electronic logs-leash like I am. But it was amusing tale.

"What do you draw?"

He pulled out his 'portfolio' a withered scrap of paper with some rude elementary drawings upon it. He talked about drawing me, my truck, from a photograph, etc. and even offered to shine my rims in the deal and then I knew for sure what he was. How do I get rid of him? I gave him a buck, I think, or maybe I did not, but somehow,

without his help I gotter in the hole and tried to sleep without any more bedtime tales.

I told Short Fuse in the afternoon. "Oh, Yeah! *The Artist!*" he'd come across him too. We compared notes about these guys in the 'stops:

There were an amazing number of people who always seemed to run out of gas just at truck stops nowhere else - why would you drive without enough money for gas to your destination??? More tales. Lost my wallet, got a flat tire, we hear them all and they are mostly just tales. For a woman alone, I try to take more mercy, for I am alone, and every once in a while I can really help someone who's just broke down or poor. But alas there are so many tall tales out here:

'Jumping Jehoshaphat! It's a miracle!' The 'crippled' guy with the crutches I'd seen sitting on the off-ramp in St Paul, MN can now not only walk but, he can now *run* across a four lane highway, even! Sights like that jade you for sure. But, I was trying to do good and be helpful so I had stopped to talk to him - 'Why don't you try trucking, you can still be homeless but you can make some dough. You don't have to have an apartment, shoot; you can save your rent up to buy a house." After my chat with him I gave him some money, I am too ashamed to say how much and, I walked down the street about a hundred yards and then turned back to look at him 'And now, he can run like a champion!' I said as I saw.

Another guy I gave a buck or two made a bee-line for the nearest liquor store in McAllen, Texas, didn't even try to hide it.

In Brooklyn on Atlantic Avenue, upon finishing delivering to a store a ways away. I walked to get some grub and a guy, *while fueling up his late model Honda*, said to me, who was walking in the dark and didn't have a car with me, and a woman to boot "Got any spare change?" Where's your shame?? *One hand on the pump -- one hand out!*

Near Bakersfield, CA a filthy young man came up to my window - I was sitting at the wheel on an important phone call concentrating and looking down at papers in my lap. When I didn't look up he began screaming and making violent gestures with his fists at me because I waved him off. Now when I see someone coming I find a very important reason to go to the back of my cab.

On and on, and so I do not feed the drug problem anymore, but I am thankful for my job, remembering all the mishaps He'd helped me from, looking at them:

There, but for the Grace of God, go I.

(AA)

Dangers out there: Ice and Psychos

I get asked a lot "Aren't you afraid out there?"

"Well, certainly ICE is a top contender for that spot."

And it is true. In winter I avoid Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri and North Texas for that reason - North of them is frozen but crunchy traction in snow. Below them is rain. *In between them is ICE!*

But at least you can predict Ice - i.e. it's in winter, early spring, you can watch the weather channel! I was in the Weather field in the Navy, remember?

But how can you predict a psycho?

"Folks, tonight, were going to have a fifty percent chance of Psycho." He'll say "Because there's a COLD front moving in tonight." But tomorrow will be sunny and warm and there'll only be ten percent chance of Psycho."

Just about Any women can relate to you a story of a psycho, but this one was so beautifully quick that it was a 'road collectable' like a shot glass or a refrigerator magnet and the collection of other strange stories I gathered in here.

I pulled into the Pilot at Lordsburg, NM exit 10. I decided I only wanted a drink and so I pulled all the way forwards so that someone could fuel behind me as I went inside. As I entered the pilot doors, I looked back, no one was behind me, so I proceeded to fill up my drink cup and relax.

About a sixty seconds later a very tense scruffy male driver about fifty was having the desk page the "W**** driver to please pull off the fuel aisle immediately!! "YOU'RE BLOCKING THE FUEL AISLE!" Since there were other aisles were WIDE open and easy to pull through, and I'd only been there something like sixty seconds I thought *they couldn't possibly be talking about me!* Plus one could always back out of the aisle - there was little traffic that day. So I relaxed and was looking at candy bars another ten seconds or so - debating if a Snickers truly is a dietetic food or not. I could now see a red truck parked two feet behind mine. "Well, I'll just mosey along now." I said, my daily battle with sweets, surmounted.

When I came out about ten seconds after this thought, my driver side mud flap was torn off.

I looked at this, thinking "Silly me, well, I'll just have to get with Short Fuse in Texas and get it put back on again, silly me." and I pulled forwards and off the fuel aisle. How could I have done that,

there were no obstacles - Then I realized as I was pulling up that this was done intentionally!! I stopped right there and said:

"This'll be on camera too!!!" I jumped out of the cab and walked around I had missed the opportunity to block the perpetrator in! And as I thought these thoughts - there he drove coming my way! I was staring HARD at his license plate; I pointed to my torn mud flap and screamed:

"You couldn't wait only 80 seconds for me to finish,
You PSYCHO!!!

How dare you damage my truck!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Suddenly the perpetrator was like a fire engine truck in its hurry to exit the Pilot and I looked into his cowardly eyes as he drove off - and ran away - in them was hatred because I am a woman.

It'd be years after incidents like these that I would even talk to another driver, and I only conversed with drivers that worked for my company - and thus could be accounted for if they cracked like a cylinder head.

But, I had my long-term friends, Short Fuse, The Mac Man and so on I could rely upon and a digital recorder with 80 Gigabytes of conversation storage with myself, and so onward I pulled, telling these tales into my recorder and waiting for Hurricanes and Breakdowns to stall me long enough to type them all on in.

I became like many other women truck drivers: a phantom out here, to myself, solitary, like the High Plains Drifter, Solo, and Solitary but unharmed. I tried to make female friendship with other lady drivers, and these were illusive, but wonderful in their short-lived season. Oh well, I still had Short-Fuse, my 'Former-Active Marine' Angel.

Panties

Back in the days when I still kept my CB on just to hear if Smokey was lurking around or if there were traffic snarls or accidents, I was listening to my CB as I was headed on in to the Lodi TA in Ohio and traffic was slowing although it was a Saturday night and so I put the radio on and was asking around about it:

"What's the twenty on the accident, Eastbound?" I asked.

And they were telling me, "Westbound you got a bumper car at the 120 stick backed up to the 125."

"Oh, roger that, and thank you."

"Where you headed tonight sweetie?"

“Well, just want to cool my heels for a bit at the TA.”

And we started talking about all the traffic when this ominous loud voice interrupted us:

“I’m not wearing any panties.”

“I’m not wearing any panties”

“Shut-up!!” Some guy out there told him.

“Sure, buddy you can see my Fruit of the Looms!”

“I’m not wearing any panties.” He said again and I was looking around for the pervert around me the voice broadcasts so loud that he must be right around all of us on the Westbound side of I-71 that night.

“No, asshole.” Some other driver told him off. But that didn’t stop him and he kept at it over and over again every minute or so, and his CB broadcast so powerful that he actually broadcast over all of our voices, which made conversations annoying. And it was the tone of the way he said it – like he was a molester or something vile, he said it nastily.

“He’s so rude.” I said. “As if I’m going to show him my panties!” he reminded me, in truth of my mother’s husband, a creep.

“Where is that *sshle guys?”

“I’m not wearing any panties.”

“Shut-up!”

“I don’t know, but I’ve heard that dude before.”

Now we were at a stop and I was looking around for the pervert again –But no one could find him and he kept at it.

“You know what, I’ve heard him before too!” I said realizing that I had. I just assumed before that quite a few guys had strange sexual fetishes like seeing panties and that these were different guys doing this. But they all had the same predator-molester sound to them? The low, nasty vile almost whispering voice?

“I’m not wearing any panties.”

“I’m going to kick your ass, asshole!” someone else told him.

“Why would he be saying that to a bunch of truck driving *men*! He’s seen me here, the only female and he’s harassing me!” Perhaps he was following me around? It wasn’t too far-fetched of an idea, for I would run into the same guys at times. “Or perhaps he has a very powerful radio?”

“I’m not wearing any panties.”

“I’ve heard that dude in West Virginia.” Someone said. And then I remembered that I had heard him in Illinois. He must be a truck driver, like us, spreading his vile all over the place!”

After a while I couldn’t stand it no more and I turned off the radio and listened to myself think.

Later on the phone I talked to both Short-Fuse and Jimmy Mac and they had heard him too!! And later Jimmy had called his long time friend/Mentor who had over twelve years driving Linda who had also heard him and asked her about it and this is how we got the real story on that voice.

The guy has a super antenna mounted out and broadcasts this recording all over the US!!!

“You mean to tell me, some creep has paid thousands of dollars to mount a high powered broadcasting CB antenna, just so he can say *“I’m not wearing any panties.”* to a bunch of other men?!!

“That’s right.” Jimmy said.

“Why don’t he just buy himself a speedboat, or a Corvette?”

“I don’t know. Or go on a cruise, or to Vegas and get laid!” he laughed.

“That’s pretty messed up to spend thousands of dollars *just so he can say that to other men!*”

“Some people have more money than sense.”

And Jimmy had a wily sense of humor for months after that when we talked he kidded me over and over:

“I’m not wearing any panties.”

Seems silly, but the joke between us not only made us laugh, but gave us something to bond over over the many years – a sort of secret password to our friendship and like anything with men, it had to be a little honery, but we clicked over that joke for many thousands of miles, and, I guess it wasn’t so bad afterall.

In Radium Pass

I liked to cross the Canadian Rockies in many different places – when I could afford to, based on the end location of the load and so I had tried them all: Jasper, Crow’s Nest, Radium and Banff. I’d seen elk, bear and of course numerous deer.

But I seldom took such passes at night or with an approaching snowstorm – I’d go the easier, more populated routes, like through the Banff’s Canadian Rocky National Park.

But one night with a storm coming I did take the wrong road – a road I knew to be very rural and back mountain. It was where I’d seen the bears and elks and sheep and as soon as I started my left turn I was “OH NO!” for there would be few chances for a safe U-turn in the Rocky Mountains at night!! Oh my gosh. So I prayed. And I stayed ultra alert as I drove and as it flurried a little. Well at least I’ll get to go by the Radium hot springs – a tiny crack in the Rockies Granite that I wound my way through before, it was delightful and I wondered if I could park and get a good spa, sometime, but, of course not in winter in the middle of the night! It was just something to possibly do one day. It was interesting enough with all its rock formations to give me something to look forwards to in the long lonely mountainous drive across the Rockies that night.

So, I didn’t call the RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police – I kept on driving. Ah I saw a car passed me and stayed ahead of me, so I didn’t feel so alone. Since I was behind it for a while in the wildly winding roads I saw its tail quite a bit.

Then it sped up and disappeared and I had this dark, back mountain road all to myself again for a while.

So I was very surprised when this same car passed me again! "What the..." I said on ultra alert now. He must have gone into a camping area and was hidden by the foliage and I passed him and didn't see him. He must have needed to use the restroom I tried to reassure myself, but I wasn't convincing me any, especially after he began to play games with me like speed up and then slow way down! No cell phone signal, but I did have Qualcomm signal (which I didn't usually have in Canada) finally and of course I had my big ol truck!! I began to back off tremendously, now I was going 25 mph. After a while another car came and was between us for a long time and the driver now was keeping pace as a normal car driver would and a relaxed and calculated the miles left to Radium.

But, again the other car passed him and I came around a corner to find him completely stopped in the middle of the road!! He was shining his bright lights as if a deer was in front of him, but I could plainly see no deer!! Now, I came to a dead stop too! "What are you gonna try a car-jack style on my truck!!" "I bet he's waiting for me to get impatient and try to pass him and I realized when he had passed me two times earlier that he had probably discovered that I was an alone female driver.

I refused to come upon him. He was an eight of a mile a way, and then he took off again and after about five minutes I left and did the same thing down another stretch of road. He must have been a real idiot for he picked the spots where I had extreme illumination of the moonlight and the upper position advantage to see all around, why he did not pick an isolated tight curve in the road, I do not know. Probably he didn't want to get flattened. But, this time I set my brakes, pulled over and waited twenty minutes before I took off again, telling myself if he does this again, I'm gonna get a case of the fireworks but pretty d@mn good - and then, God help me!

But I finally came upon the cracks in the mountains at Radium and had outsmarted some psycho.

What makes a man pursue a woman who can definitely handle a big rig as good as any shot-gun? I don't know, but the very same kind of thing happened to me at night in Maywood, New Jersey - a man passed in front of me, saw that I was a woman driving alone and stopped his car under a bridge in such a way that I wouldn't be able to swing around him, but very alert, I stayed far away and simply pulled on my bighorn - waking all the neighbors - until he decided that I was no fool, to be driving this here big rig, and so he ran away.

The Fireworks

Another incident happened to me as I drove by my former home in Alabama on the interstate. As I did so I noticed a white day cab had come up on my left and drove nose to nose with me for a mile or so. Since it was three am (courtesy of electronic logs) I didn't look over, sensing danger. But he flicked on his cab light - it was an enormous fat black man around 50. I ignored him and slowed down. He slowed down too. Then I sped up and he sped up. 'Ugh!' Then he really slowed down and fell behind me. He got off at a rest area near the Georgia border. I breathed a sigh of relief.

About ten minutes later, though, his truck came flying back besides me on the left again. This time he nosed up to me and flicked on his cab light again - He was completely naked!!!

Though he was well over three hundred pounds, he still managed to expose himself under an enormous belly that went all around the steering wheel and he was Jacking himself off as he drove besides me!!

I got on the CB now! I was mad! I was cussing him left and right! But other truckers were telling me stuff like: 'Chill, lady, chill. Haven't you ever seen one before?' And the one truck with a lit cross on his grill flew past me and avoided me, because of all my cussing!! And then I was calling the highway patrol with the predator's plate and company name as I drove.

I read somewhere in the TA Truck stop Magazine about a lady driver who'd done thirty years on this road, including the ALCan highway and what she said about herself is so true. You have to be ready to defend yourself out here at all times. She said of herself. 'I am still like a firecracker; I can go off in thirty seconds or less'. And I have had to plenty of times; trust me, like that night! AND, this was not the first time this had happened!! And then my very ill mother's husband exposed himself to me - right in front of her.

However, this cussing reaction is not something I value in myself at all! And indeed I have found that it comes off, believe it or not - as my ARROGANCE! Here I was screaming at the 300 pound sexual predator - and all I got was backlash!! *It was I who got the backlash!!!*

It's like frickin combat out here at times, but at least in Afghanistan the enemy really is the enemy!! And people won't look down on you if you get an installment of the fireworks. I feel that at times I have suffered for post-traumatic stress disorder on these highways - the danger can get to you, along with the constant wildly weaving car driving all around you at all times, while the DOT steadily ignores them BUT hates YOU.

I haven't ever been physically attacked either, for I was ready to defend myself like a firecracker and go-off!! These nice but judgmental people can't handle a big rig nor the big lifestyle that

comes with it not get it. And this is sort of an explanation, even an apology to those I have been rude to:

*To not care or not cry, even as I fall, as if from the sky, to be
brash and boldly be strong, even as all looked at you shocked all
along:*

*Hoping you'd understand
What it takes to be a girl,
In the world of a man!*

Fireworks Part II

San Diego, CA

And one instant, I did go off great, like 4th of July Show, and it did save me.

I'd park my rig down by the Naval Yard - in reminiscence of my Navy days and taken a long walk to the trolley in town.

After a long stroll in town - I could walk ten miles at a shot - I went back to the main station and awaiting the blue line back towards San Ysidro and my truck.

As I stood there, I saw five black guys next to me cheering, and I looked into a trolley car, they were cheering another black man beating up a pretty white girl, who was ducking down against the window in cover.

I screamed and others did for the trolley police who stopped all trains, and the thug was going off the train - with her purse. And the black guys were all laughing and cheering this.

I got on the other stopped trolley for safety and we were all saying 'what a creep! And those kids, such creeps!' When the very thug jumped on the same train I was on and was two yards from me!

"There is he!!!" I screamed "There is he is!! There he is there he is!!!" I got louder and louder and the thug that was beating up that girl - turned and FLED ME!!!!!!!!!!!!

Now, it was I who'd jumped off the trolley, and was pursuing him!!

"There he goes!!!" I screamed as I came upon the Trolley Police who stood there like statues.

Down the alleyway some he was rummaging through her purse as he walked away and then threw her purse down.

"There he goes!"

And they did nothing, because the girl had gotten her purse back - with or without money, credit cards, identification, etc. It was an empty hulk of a sack! What a lame excuse - so what she got the carcass back of her bag! Did you check before you decided to not pursue him??

And me? I got justified again for keeping the fireworks, at hand and at arsenal and ready to deploy!

Deliveries to New York City

I delivered in various rough spots like the boroughs of New York City, Camden, Long Beach, Calif and I'd spend the night in some dark spots like Hunt's Point Market, where I didn't dare even leave my truck. Once I was sleeping a guy thumped my truck - to see if anybody was actually inside so he could then break and enter and I had to thumb back vigorously to keep him from doing so. They finally started making tiny laptops that I could shuttle with me like a purse - because some coward had stolen mine while I was unloading on Atlantic Avenue.

Have you ever noticed that hard work and initiative are the first things to go with a person that's on drugs or in crime? Why is that? What is it about a bad lifestyle that zaps initiative? Here I was, wanting to do hand unloading simply so that I could actually get exercise while trucking and indeed it was a bit too much exercise for me - it was hand moving 120,000 pounds of merchandise a week on at least seven heavy rollers I set up of a 100 pounds each. Thus I could say I was doing the work of one or even two men and while I was doing a man's job, some lazy coward - probably a man - was breaking into my truck and stealing my laptop!

When I saw it was gone, I got an installment of the Fireworks and I yelled at the top of my lungs for all to hear:

"You had to steel from a lady who can outwork your lazy @ss by a two hundred percent!" You fricken coward!" Some sweet elderly black ladies were gathering around me consoling me I remember. I had been reduced to shaking and tears.

But the perpetrator was already using my plastic to buy 400 dollars of subway tokens, according to MasterCard, which were then probably sold for drugs within two hours on the streets. And whoever has my laptop knows who I am for all my writing had my name on it - I back up my stories tremendously. But they have my name and everything and I wonder how good they feel about themselves? It's been years now, and they've never returned it back to me.

I kindly asked the investigators to go to the subway station to get the guy on camera buying all those tokens with my cards and I

added up all the things they'd stolen - it was thousands of dollars and you know what they said back to me?

"Oh, that would be grand larceny." As if that would be too much of a charge for all that he had stolen. It was like a misdemeanor to them, but I had lost some stories I had written as well.

"Yeah? And what of it??" I cried back

But they never did any more work on my case.

I had many deliveries still to do and had to leave the city and somehow I could not get the police department to understand that I could not simply drive back down to Brooklyn there for my police report a few days later on the phone and they treated me rougher than a criminal in my attempts to have it mailed to me. Didn't they had other victims who drove trucks enter their cities?? They wouldn't even mail my police report to me!!! Eventually they sent me a form I got months later when I finally got home in LA and I sent it back later and then they sent me another form I got months later, saying I needed to fill out another form and - there it was before me - the police were on their own schemes - they were not going to help me even get a police report out of the crime! How was I going to get them to look into the videos of the Subway station!!

And although I enjoyed working that account, I quit that very day and went back on the longhaul. *Only a fool would do this job*, I chanted to myself repetitively. *Only a fool would do this job!! Only a fool...*

I heard a few days later from Jimmy, the MacMan, some driver from our company had been hand unloading into the middle lane in Brooklyn - just as I had been doing that very week - a car had slammed him into the back of the trailer and he had been killed that very day.

As the years went by I sometimes overreacted to things - I wonder why- and I had been exposed to a rough way of life, I began to fear the fireworks, although they had freed me at the same time. I could go off, like a rocket at times, and it would save me, and other times get me in a great deal of difficulty and as the miles went by I realized it was me, brought up in a civilized manner that did not understand me, the tough trucker lady I had become, or sometime the ghost that would drift in and out of cities, talking to none. What had I become?

And then I'd got back on my Long, Longhauling Canadian loads and sung as I rolled all alone -

Six hundred and fifty miles a day...

Six hundred and fifty miles a day...

And I came upon acceptance of myself; and others, that if they didn't get it, they didn't belong in my life, and onwards I rolled onto the open, long-ended road.

Part III Wildlife

Twelve foot long alligator in LA

L.A. Cowgirl

How I got my CB Handle

My friend Short Fuse was always rescuing people in the Marine Corps and now and even carried tow as a trucker he carried chains and extra mud flaps in order to do so, and a matter of fact, that how we met - he stuck on one of his extra mud flaps on my Century that I knocked off in Minnesota in 2005. And he heroically rescued another lady who had half her face torn off when she ran into the back of a flatbed truck with poles protruding out the back in Staunton, Virginia (See Short Fuse and The Life Flight). I wasn't very good at helping anybody like that, but I kept alert after his heroic help of that lady and would call 911 if I saw a fire starting, Kids on the highway (true!) or drunks, so when I saw a herd of Cattle crossing the 60 between El Paso and Carlsbad, NM, I thought:

"What would Short Fuse do?"

At first I tried my cell phone it was so remote that no 911 signal went out. So I got on my CB and was hailing guys for miles.

Then I looked - I was the only one who'd actually pulled over to help and even to call and there were several terrifying near misses and a cloud of burnt brake smoke was all around and the sun was getting low down. "What would Short Fuse do...?"

And I grabbed my red umbrella - it was red like a Bull Fighter's Cape, and then I grabbed my cell phone - for light.

But when I got out of the cab these cows were a bit bigger than they looked from my steering wheel! And I looked - they were Bulls - No Bull!

"OOOOOps!"

I popped right back into my cab!

More near misses and then I got an idea.

The Grinch got a wonderful ...awful idea... I quoted Dr. Seuss to myself for biblical-like assurance.

I began to roll down the high to do an 18 wheeler cattle-round up! That's is what Short-Fuse'd do...

I went all around that road, honking my big horn at them. I did this for quite some time - the only one daring to help them - when finally the rancher showed up in his pickup, and screaming at me

"You're driving them the wrong way!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Ah! I got-ya! I saw and I said a quick Prayer.

"Oh, Father please help me today!!"

And I put the rig on the WRONG side of the road and then even onto its shoulder - and guess what - that did the trick! They all went on the other side of the road - his side - and I moved back over then - all together in one big mass of a herd, travelling eastbound down Highway 60, led by, yours truly, me!!

"Well, we can't do this forever guys!!" I told them - as if they could hear - as we went down the road further and so finally I put the rig on the right shoulder again - to cut off their eastbound traffic - and I could see the farmer was coming behind them with his truck. "Perfect!"

But there were going around me, trying to go around my truck's grill that I had almost nosed to the fence - at least five abreast! They were trying to get past!!

"You bastards, I've had enough!"

I yanked on my brakes and jumped out with my cell phone and umbrella again! This time I just went berserk on them! I truly went wild! They were coming at me in a stampede five abreast and I screamed and hollered and lost it big time! All the fury I had for Psychos, electronic logs and youthful dispatchers I channeled into a wild Indian-like war dance/scream, and would you know all thirty did a complete U turn right there!

And do you know what happened to be right there by my trailer!!! In miles upon miles of ranch line fencing across this barren country - a perfect gap in the barb wire fence - probably where they'd first escaped and into it they all went back again - five abreast!

Funny to see the whole stampeding herd do a U turn because of me... think I'll never forget that scene! Even stranger - or miraculous - to this story that the gap in the fence happening to be right there where I'd done my war dance!

...Angels in charge of you to guard you in all your ways...

The Rancher never thanked me - I guess he was mad at all the exercise I'd given his meat on our jog down the highway together - and so I got back in my cab, because finally another truck driver had now finally stopped to help him - it was a Wal-Mart driver, who got caught up to me later down the highway, telling me he'd helped mend the guys fence right there because he was a part time farmer in this region as

well. He told me his real name, Jeff, I was surprised, so I told him mine:

"My name's Mare, cuz I don't have a CB handle yet."

"Oh, we'll have to see about that." He said. "Over."

"I really know nu-thin about cows, I confess. I'm from LA."

"No kidding!" he said. "Over."

"It was really weird to see them do a U turn because of me!"

"I bet!" and "Over."

As Jeff and I talked many drivers up and down the 60 heard us talking and teased me on the CB: "We all heard all for miles about the Blonde, the Cellphone and the Red Umbrella Roundup."

"That was me, guys."

"Guess what, Mare I DO have something to give you for all your troubles." Jeff said.

"What's that, Jeff?"

"I'm giving you a CB handle today - You are now known as 'The L.A. Cowgirl.'"

True story - no bull.

More Musings on Cows

I always did a lot of border loads, I was sent to the North Dakota border to cross into Alberta, bound for Calgary - again. I got stalled at Minot, ND because the paperwork was enormously fouled up and I could get a huge fine for crossing like that. Sue, my long time border crossing agent told me

"Oh, Mary. It might be days before this is fixed. The shipper has gone home for the weekend."

"Oh, really?" I tried to sound sad, because in the mean time I had found out that the Minot State Fair was just down the road. Remember, I 'm from LA and this was kinda all new and neat to me.

So I walked all the way over there. I was thrilled.

And there were all the cows - I never get to see them up close! They weren't as forbidding as the bulls had been. In fact they were kind of lazy and laid back, and I enjoyed looking at them.

I got out my camera and was zapping them left and right - I have a 'gonzo-style' of photography: zap-zap-zap, well, hyperactive and getting the looks on their faces, their expressions, and their doe like eyes. I went down the next row and was going to zap more pictures when I heard laughter muffled behind me. I kinda glanced. I guess this was a bit on the odd side - but remember I'd seen precious little in years other than Cows and Corn and sometimes Wheat, and every once in a while I'd seen a deer or an elk or even a mountain lion.

But being a writer I was inquisitive about the laughter behind me and then I checked out the scene of the picture I was about to be taking: Two long rows of cow backs facing butt to butt!

Anyway, I decided to 'hightail' out of their, being a bit embarrassed, and I went down and I watched two young, clean-faced corn-fed girls about to groom a young bull, when he suddenly blitzed like a deer in front of a semi, and ran right forwards to me where an itsy little gate stopped his sudden charge at me.

"Wow!" I said stunned. "What did I do?" I asked them

"Nothing, he just freaks like that sometimes when we groom him."

"It was a bit personal, that's all."

"Yeah."

"Well, I guess I got my own little rodeo for free, eh?"

"Right."

The next place I saw a bull hauler. Now I was on more familiar ground, it being a Peterbilt 379 a model that I had once driven, backed up to the grandstands, in fact this was more exciting than the actual rodeo itself - it was real work truckers do on the road - unloading the bulls for the rodeo - the Professional Bull Riders Show - the PBR. And there was tension in the air - one of the bulls was freaking, and they were shocking him (I think) back into the trailer and he was thundering down the chute right in front of me.

"Wow!"

A young kid was sitting by the fence - chewing on hay, watching it all succinctly. He had all the gear on as to ride one of these beasts. He was almost from a movie.

"Are you a bull rider?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

I stared hard, he was probably one of the PBR stars and I was probably talking to someone fairly famous - and, after my little round-up near Carlsbad, NM we had a little bit in common after all! I recounted it to him and he told me of the numerous bulls he'd ridden and multiple injuries: like collapsed lung, broken ribs, broken back! It was funny he was many years younger than me, but I felt a bit of an attraction. But anyway, I needed to get my tickets for the show, so I thanked him and left to go the grandstand.

But to my chagrin the tickets were all sold out. I'd already seen action anyway yet I was acutely disappointed and decided that I was going to see a rodeo for sure, either the Calgary Stampede or the Frontier Days in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Months later I got a hometime load to Cheyenne and it was a brilliant day. The last time I'd seen Wyoming was on a bleak winter day. Though I'd been hundreds of miles north of Wyoming, this state had always been the most rugged, the windiest, the stormiest, and the

bleakest. I don't know why. But today was marvelous and I got all geared up for a long walk put my GPS, 'Judy', in 'pedestrian mode' the Frontier Days was five miles away.

Underneath all that gloom and snow was actually a quaint little city - like ones I'd seen all over the US - like the lilies returning back in the spring she had bloomed once again. Adorably houses, and gardens with flowers, kids rode the streets in bikes and skated and green effervescence of the tree leaves of a town alive, and not thinking of snow ever again. I enjoyed my long walk and of course chatted with Short Fuse to make it go by double quick.

I bought my tickets - the ones I could afford were high in the Grandstand. I sat down and chatted with folks all around me, when out came the lady bull riders in all their glamour and white chapped leather finery. Wow, could they ride beautifully - the cantered and galloped all around at high speeds not losing their hats or their glamour at all, Miss Cheyenne, Miss Frontier Days and Miss Wyoming.

Then the bull riders andEveryone all around translated what was happening. It was great fun.

Then I saw the beautiful Miss Wyoming walking up the grandstands - she was heading my way. She was as beautiful and glamorous up close, and she came and sat down right behind me with her family!

Short Fuse will kill me if I didn't get a picture, so I boldly turned around to ask her and she graciously accepted. And I sent it to him. It was a nice touch to my day.

Then the round up of horses

After the long rodeo, there was still much to see, so I wondered around for many hours looking at all the exhibits. Then I decided to walk back, it was five miles more.

I yakked on the phone, I looked all around. I loved to walk but I was getting winded and it seemed for hours and hours the way 'home' this time. At last I made it back to my truck, the sun was going down. I looked down at the odometer on Judy, I had walked thirteen miles that day. But I'd gotten my fill of cows, I think.

Bird and wild life watching

Do you kind a get the idea that I spent a great deal of time by myself such that the creatures that I did see all around me: Cows, Deer and birds, became a great deal of interest to me, I studied their habitat, read about them. I found them interesting. *They were the only live things around me.*

One creature I saw a great deal more of than I ever reckoned to see was the American Baldheaded Eagle!!! My gosh I saw at least fifty of those impressive birds to date, shoot, some of them even swooped down in front of me, I am so lucky to say: Tehachapi Pass, California and in somewhere in the Judith Mountains of Montana. Maybe that's Indian Lore for another million miles of good luck??

I looked for eagles' nests, I seen turkey, elk, mountain lion, foxes by the Walmart Supercenter in downtown Joliet, IL. I've seen everything, bears, swans, rams, Canadian Geese, and the impressive Artic Turn which flies from Pole to Pole, shoot, get more miles than I, myself, diesel powered!!

I had the usual opportunity to look for Orcas – or, Killer Whales, believe it or not, as I put my rig on a two hour ferry to deliver insulation to Vancouver Island, British Columbia many times – Victoria, Nanaimo, BC. Our journey across the pristine waters was narrated by a Biologist on the ferry, who even gave us the name of the permanent pod of eight Orcas stationed there, versus the migratory packs that would come and go. Though I saw eagles . and though I crossed many times I didn't get to see my killer whale, though the idea of being in their territory was astonishing enough, in itself, that I was doing this as a truck driver and getting paid to watch for whales.

Then one animal that eludes me is the moose, despite being on an account that delivered and criss crossed Maine on back roads in the middle of the night (Curtesy of Electronic Logs), I never saw one. So one day, on a hometime done in Bar Harbor, Maine, I had a Royal Canadian Sailor Lady friend with me, I saw a Moose made up of Christmastree lights: and said, "Alas, Christine, now I have seen my moose!" and we celebrated with two big red lobsters (and another creature I can add to my list of wildlife I encountered on the road). "To My Moose! La Haicham!"

More about deer.

I get lots of time to think of things and I was pondering why, just why were there so many dead deer??

When I had to drive at night (Curtesy of Electronic Logs) as I so happened to do, I often thought of ice, and Deer immediately, where would they be hiding: "Where would I be if I was a deer with an hobby of ramming semi-trucks in the middle of the night?

And as soon as I would see a deer I would carefully apply the services brakes in a controlled manner, even if the animal was way on the opposite side of the four lane road. Sounds too cautious, but time and time again I've seen deer blitz – and though it's illogical – they blitz directly into my path no matter how far away, or whatever direction they're facing:

A deer goes in the direction of its nose.

And the impatient car driver who swerved wildly around me flying me the bird, obviously thinking that I was a numbskull to slow down for a deer way over there was now smoking his breaks and swerving violently to stop. Ha!

"Beautiful!" I told him, as if he could hear "You didn't care about Bambi!"

Another incident I came upon a nice four pointer way on the other side of a road in Oklahoma, he, too, was far away and blitzed into me – as I was smoking my breaks I watched him as if in slow motion, the bugger was ducking as he blitzed – as if to get UNDER my headlights! I stopped the rig, and in the moonlight I could find no trace of impact, nor had I heard any sound. And then I got some fireworks installed and cussed him soundly – I only hope he wasn't too offended!

On another account I tangoed with a doe one night: If I went right, she went right, so I'd go left and she'd go left, back and forth as I applied my brakes just hard enough as to not Jack Knife us as we danced on down the road together and even as I did all this my mind was saying:

'it's not if, but where'

and at the very last split second, she got her tail hairs past my driver's side headlights!

Another observation is that the great majority of deer are killed on the shoulder – not in the lanes themselves. Just look and you'll see what I mean. I used to think that everyone who hit one was just moving her out of the lane, but no, I observed one night a deer standing with her two little hooves right on the fog line puzzled, trying to figure it all out. In fact one rarely sees much bloodshed or dismemberment at deer deaths at all, which I puzzled over, and realized, deer are aware that this highway is danger and are trying to figure it out – how to look both ways and they edge into the granny lane, where, they are killed by the thousands by being hit as they nosed into the lane. And I wonder if state biologist were ever brought into question this very peculiar fact that they were just about killed everyone there on the fogline. If this observation is true, could we not do something about it through the biologist behavioral analysis? Could we make it clear to deer, in deer friendly foglines, somehow? Cows are fooled by the painted lines, for example.

I also noted that a tremendous number of dead deer occurred in places where they had just freshly mowed the highways. You can't just tell a rooky this that danger increases as the grass is mowed.

Non-Blitzing Deer Breed (NBDB) of Montana. Now I was wondering why deer weren't learning, if evolution theory was true – (I actually don't have a problem with Evolution and Creation Theories Co-existing) and I was wondering why deer weren't learning us and thus evolving into a Trucker Friendly Breed of Deer (TFBD). We were on the highway now a full century. That was until I came upon the Non-blitzing Deer Breed (NBDB) of Montana. One night I was driving (Curtesy of Electronic logs) a dark what I call the Outback of Montana on the shortcut US 212 that cuts from near Belle La Fourche, SD over to Billings through some of the bleakest darkest territory and also where Custer was whipped at Little Big Horn. And I saw HUNDREDS of deer that night. They were lighter in color than the numerous ones I'd seen in Indiana and elsewhere. They were sort of a peachy pink color. And they were more lithe. They were grouped in breeds all along US 212 and the grass growing there must have been extra delicious, for they were grouped all along the fog lines, such that had I had a passenger, they could have reached out and gently scooted the little fawn butts to the other side of the fog line. It was I who was moving carefully aside for them. And I only saw two dead deer that night versus the hundreds I saw serenely standing there by the highway and not blitzing a bit!

And now – at the time of this writing – it's been five long years and over a half a million miles of musing about deer, and, knock on plastic wood, I haven't hit one yet.

& Driving Jersey Style

Unless you've been there before, you never go to a new place in Jersey and wing it, like you would in the West. Oh no. You've got to PONDER ever turn, every highway

Every Step you take...

Every Move you make...

You must research your trip: Get out your atlas, get your looking glass out, and ponder every road, every overpass, every bridge! Some places in New Jersey near Newark I will not go unless I go online

and get an Arial picture from Google Earth – for one time it helped my avoid, again, the Holland Tunnel, by seeing the swing I would make at a big red building one street before it. Its fruitless talking to the customer in Newark, because plenty of them do not drive and couldn't even tell you how they got to work, even if they did. Could you blame them? Itsy-bitsy narrow winding streets, endless looping off-ramps to disorient you, endless one way streets, and combination exits, with more than one highway exiting.

Short Fuse had once told me Trucks must only take bridges to get into Manhattan: The Triboro, The Tappan Zee, The Goethals/Verrazano and, the GW (George Washington). I did start to go into the Holland Tunnel one time and I frantically got on the CB for help, and my brethren were there for me, and saying that there was a 'U' turn right before the tunnel – you have to actually go as if you're going straight into the tunnel and at the last second, you literally wrap your truck around cement columns. It was here that I found that my trailer tires act as bumpers — if you do it just right - they bounce off and literally cushion and deflect the trailer around the columns!!

Jersey and the Omerta Code of Silence

Jersey and the toll booths

The Jersey Jug Handles

Not too common elsewhere in America, nor explained too well on your CDL course, are the 'Jersey Jug Handles', not shown on any map, nor icon depicting the jug means to do any kind of left turn you gotta do a right turn – Jersey Style - on the Jug handle, see drawing Fig. 1.1.1.2.a. To perform this maneuver, you move the rig onto the Right lane and – take a breath – and SQUEEEEEZE it onto the handle like this: See Fig 1.1.1.2.b

Note: JersDot officials have measured this jug handle with a micrometer, so swing wide, because they've given you extra clearance of almost 1/32 of an inch! But, Heck, what's that to us – Super truckers when we can put her in the hole with two inches on either side of our trailer some seventy feet behind us, and that, my friends, is going backwards, so what is that to us going forwards!! And as I said earlier about how tires act as a kind of deflecting bumper on columns...

And although driving in the New York boroughs is very challenging as well, I song I sing often To myself when dispatched to NYC:

I'll take New York anytime

Just don't send me to Jersey waterfront, my friends.

Driving Texas Style

There is only one other place in all of America and Canada that rivals the New Jersey waterfront in its utter ‘Jerseyishness’, and that, my friends is Austin, Texas. The frontage roads are the problem there, as they can only be approached using one way frontage roads and they whole system is endlessly complicated by the endless frontage roads on every Interstate. And every freeway has wily winding looping arms that reach up into the sky and rollercoast you down upon them.

But I especially enjoy driving Texas in El Paso – a pretty darn trucker friendly city, with Austin style frontage roads everywhere, especially since they have the underpass embankments, that if you used to be into skateboarding as a kid, you can appreciate doing banking maneuvers in an 18 Wheeler, or rather like the tilting an airplane makes at final approach:

This one is off I-10, exit 26, Gateway Blvd, where, unless you *SuuuuuWing* it just right to get in that tiny, jug handle- like turn, you will end up upon the embankment like this. It’s fun in the way off-roading is fun, or skateboarding: you get to push it to the limits. (You do know what irony and sarcasm means, too, don’t you? If you don’t you shouldn’t be reading this here book.)

Yonkers

I had a very heavy load of some kind of textile and directions to go through a very old section of Yonkers, New York. It was up a very steep grade and in a very old section of the city and I had my windows down to make sure I could hear everything going around me as I wound up, up and up a grade with my trailor fully loaded. I was worth eighty thousands big shots that day folks, but the traffic was so heavy on the steep grade that I and my Kitty Cat – my Catepillar Engine was really powerful in first gear, were taking her slow, looking at the old architecture and wondering what had happened to all the European immigrants that had come here and made this masterful architecture. I felt like I was in the ancient walled city of Nurnberg, Germany I had once visited, for there were castle like buildings and I was rather enchanted. And even the walled city of Nurnberg had reminded me of Jerusalem another walled city I had once visited. That’s what I loved about the East Coast, the feel of history alive, for we have only the Spanish Missions in Cali of any antiquity.

I heard whistles and in this olden place were old Italian men – still handsome in their seventies, what? --- Oh, they’re not! Yes they are! They were blowing this trucker girl, me, kisses as me and my Kitty Cat Catepillar pulled up the grade! “Bonjournio!” they cried, it was all too wonderful!

Ah! What goes up, must come down as the saying goes, and what was so good to come up was terrifying to go down. I had her in first, friends, with full Jake brakes on and flashers a pinging a way and down the at least ten percent grade went I! Going slow, I noticed that now one had a fantastic view of the Hudson River and I could see the factory now, way down there, that I would take this load to, it was right by the river. I remembered that this was all near the legend of Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, New York.

So now I had the most tightest back imaginable, so tight that I slid the tandems (the trailer's axels) all the way back so that there was no trailer swing. No one, even Short Fuse, had taught me that, I just gathered that that's what I must do, somehow.

But I got er in there and now they were unloading me, I went for a walk down by the river, the Hudson river. I was really enjoying this load. I imagined this is where Sleepy Hollow was set or nearby, I had crossed the Tappan Zee Bridge.

I went into the factory to use the bathroom and in there I found about a hundred Indian or Pakistani garment workers in there, not one white, black, or Hispanic worker was to be found! I had seen this kind of thing all across America and Canada. It was as if this was an immigration scheme – set up a factory and give H1 visas to all who pay you to, and thus you can import, legally, people into the US!, and I wondered where were all the lawsuits it takes to force equal opportunity – for not one was other than Indian. They barely, barely spoke English! How could this be legal!

Now it was my turn to leave and go back up the grade and I pulled off onto the road. “Oh my gosh, I couldn't slide my tandems back up front for the tight swings to go through Yonkers and now I was blocking the road too.

Along came a young bus driver in his twenties, “Need help?”

“I sure could use someone to help me set my tandems back.” And although he was a non trucker, I gave him a quick lesson in my axels and there were lots of cars mad, but he got them set just as any trucker would and I thanked him “Say, you got a lesson in truckin' today!” and he laughed it. New Yorkers are just great!

And back up the grade I went a lot lighter, looking for the Italian gents that made this trip so sweet and back and away, I went to P.A – to the more country-like Pennsylvanny and away from the big cities of New York, with slightly easier swings and not so much pressure. But, really just as wonderful as New York.

Shortcuts in PA

I could quote Short Fuse on any number of issues, for he had not only mentored me these many years, but really, he had been a big part of my training, and one thing he always said was:

“STAY on the Interstates!!”

This advise is particularly true in PA, but, you know when you got that squawk box, the Electronic Logs bearing down on you and you're running a tad bit behind, taking another look at the atlas and seeing a truck route (IN ORANGE) delineating a most perfect little short cut, well the urge becomes overwhelming, and well I gave into it one time, and was putting the back tandems on sidewalks to get through their tiny town squares and of course, I didn't even learn from this one, as another PA load was even later tempted me once again to bypass my good friends stern words and I found myself in Amish countryside round and a round, Dairy, farm, Dairy, little town, little town, Dairy, Dairyfarm and another Dairy and, oh, another Dairy and ten more little towns and farms.

I snuck a glance at the Old Atlas again – this little road – in orange – was only about an inch long, and when was it going to end! Surely I had traveled the inch thus far. Oh no, but more Amish countryside was in store! And the road was rising up into mountains that in next door Maryland I knew to be big mountains (for the East Coast).

And I finally found a pull-off spot (not ‘posed to do that) and sent a late macro with quite a bit of frustration in it and onwards I went. It was getting late in the day for scenic routes! When was it going to end? And, where was Cinderella going to park when her hours ran out and her carriage turns into a pumpkin??

And then I came upon a grade. Was I even on a truck route? I looked, I saw the same sign I’d seen all along ‘Truck Route 39’ on it and there was another sign by it now that read, and I quote:

13 Percent Grade

WoW!!! Interstates only go at a six degree maximum grade and I had been on other grades on the back mountains of Lassen National Park on a ten degree grade. But never anything like this!

I shoved her in first, destroyed Amish tranquility with my loud jake brakes, and I went down that grade, fully loaded at 79 thousand pounds, I was going around five mphs, I think, because I didn’t dare take my eyes off the grade for one second!!!

And what – do – you know appeared there but an impatient car, in this blessedly placid Amish Countryside – in a hurry (As they always are) and here am I on the steepest grade yet, being tailgated by a car.

My tractor and trailer were even on different stories, had there been a building nearby to judge this. My tractor was on the fifth floor, and the tandems were on the seventh and up and around and ABOVE MY HEAD. I felt I could stair at the undersides of the trailer, had I so desired! But I assure you I really had no such desire!

I arrived at the bottom to find more grades down. “Maybe this is a trucker route for Amish carts?” the car still tailed within millimeters of my tail.

I finally found the interstate and the car roared past me as I pulled over (not ‘posed to) and I messaged Scott, my dispatcher “Searching for a safe haven” and saw that I had just ran out of hours. If I documented my dilemma, the log ladies wouldn’t dock me for this log violation. I’d like to dock the DOT (Dept of Trucking) for making this a truck route!!

I finally found the interstate a half hour late and logged off, and fell into my rack. Wow what a short cut that had been!! Can you imagine had there been S.N.O.W? Don’t say that – It’s a four letter word!!!

& North Platte Nebraska epic blizzard

Most drivers go through a trainer or two until they get it and my first trainer was a red headed woman named Kay, who thought of herself as unstoppable, that was until the November Blizzard of 2000 struck the entire nation, and to this date, this was the most monumental storm I’d ever been in since.

And then

Learning about weather in a continental reference and seeing a storm from all different locations at once

The Wample Wing

On a trip to the top of Maine – to the a store on the twenty yards from the New Brunswick Border I got stopped several times by drivers who'd never seen a trailor tail, which is more common out in the West (because of Messilla Valley Transport out of New Mexico has them) than way up here and, in unusual manner, I actually had time to BS a little.

“Well, this is actually a kind of aerodynamic device to reduce drag.” I said, but no one had ever told me anything about it. It was just me and Short Fuse bsing together and figuring it out. What else could it be? A BS collector? A RADAR reflector? We mused delightedly over the years about the tail.

“Oh.” Several drivers were standing behind my rig just staring at it. It was neat to be in Maine and things had a very country feel about it, where innovations like these were brand new. “It’s kind of the same philosophy as the trailer skirt. It makes the trailer smooth – like a bullet.”

“How do you open it?”

I showed them with confidence, but I’d just figgered It out the day before. It popped out rather easy. “You just don’t want to forget that its there and back up on a door.”

“Oh Yeah!” they laughed.

“Can you imagine my surprise when I was doing my safety inspection and found that thing stuck on the back of my new trailers tale! What the heck! And no one to ask how to operate it, no instructions, nuthin’! It was shocking!”

“I bet.” They concurred.

Safety safety! safety!

“It’s perfectly invisible to the driver.” Due to the *safety geniuses*.

“What about snow collecting in it?”

“OH Poop! I don’t know!”

“Can you run with it folded up?”

“Yes. I reckon that’s what I’ll do in that case. They don’t tell me poop, I gotta figger these things out on my own – I can’t bull-lieve it!! “

Again my wit hit me, “Hey guys, wait until you see the *Wample Wings!* That’s collapsible wings for the trailer (fig 3.2 b.u.11) “of course you need the whole truckstop empty to park the buzzard, and a runway to leave, but you’ll get remarkable on time performance – straight as the crow flies!”

“Right!”

“No more interstates! LOL.”

“No more D.O.T. (Dept. of Trucking).”

“Just the F.A.A”

“And then, there’s the Harrier Enterprises, Guys.” (See fig 2.2.B.U.L.L.2)

“You’ll need a Jet Pilots’ License and military aviation experience – like landing on an aircraft carrier, BUT, you’ll never have to back up, *ever* again!

The Fire Extinguisher

This one story is fairly painful, so I'm gonna make it short and sweet:

In cleaning my truck inside one day in Dallas:

"POOOOoooooooooooooooo-FFFFFFFFFF!"

I accidently set off the fire extinguisher inside. I got like an indoor snow-storm of yellow fluffy snow that went into every nook and cranny. Being a former Navy Weather Technician I measured it as a blizzard, with a half an inch a second accumulation.

It wasn't pretty. It took many hours to clean.

I kinda had to laugh at myself, to share this with you, I hope you get the idea I don't take myself too seriously, I am a goof-up at times, as we all are.

But my friends tell me that this is their favorite story.

Tampons and the Truck Driver

People do say the darndest things - if you listen closely - with the razor blade of wit at hand you can incise some of the most hilarious things come out of their mouths - if you listen just a bit! Life is laughter and comedy if you're ready and in not too much of a hurry to see it's fabulously funny!

"It's all material, Mare!" Quothe my muse, when I so wanted to cry, "It's all material, gurl! Now, keep on rolling!"

For instance one guy was telling me about seeing an alien, which after more than five years out here, a lot of it at night under the desert skies (Curtesy of Electronic Logs), I had never had any extraterrestorial contact other than a big thump one night I took to be a meteorite. But I listened on, for, he was built like a tree, big and broad and I was attracted to him until he mentioned the alien and I could feel my enthusiasm dimming and then I was mentally getting out my razor blade again when he said that the alien was hovering over a breast-shaped mountain. Man, this guy has got to go! But I kept his words and snickered a bit with Short Fuse, later on. "Gees, Short Fuse, guys will say the darndest things - IF they think they're gonna get laid!! Ah, another jewel for my collection of stories, Short Fuse, another jewel! Another Road Collectable, you know, like shot glasses, spoons or frig magnets.

So I included another Road Collectable:

Tampons and the Trucker:

And, once I delivered my load in Calgary or Edmonton, Alberta, I usually had a day or two off to get another load south - we are required to take the our next load into the US and vice versa for Canadian drivers delivering in the US. So I often went straight to my favorite truck stops in those cities, where I had long term acquaintances and even the waitresses remembered me for years at a time - that's what I love about Canadian loads - the camaraderie!

So when I saw a Canadian female truck driver doing her laundry in the Road Ranger in Calgary, I decided to strike up and conversation with her, as we both did our wash and I found, that though younger than me, she had twenty hard years labor of driving the incredibly mountainous British Columbia! I was impressed, she was even younger than me for having so many miles - BC drivers have it the toughest, I believe - anywhere. they even have to have shortwave radios in the various high mountains that go up the coast into Alaska and the Yukon.

I listened, thus, in deference a bit - she recommended a cooler that I use to this day - the Koolatron. We traded some onboard cooking recipes in the lunchbox cooker. But hereafter conversation began to spin into an anti-US diatribe, and she knew I was Californian. She had no sense of humor whatsoever - so rare in Canadians. And everything she said was full of hatred and bitterness. And that bores me.

"Why does Calgary have so many drug addicts?" I had just come from a long walk down there and I had seen dozens of homeless and crack smoked right out in the open by the Bow river.

"Because Americans bring them over."

"But surely there must be a demand for it."

"Yeah, because of your American movies."

And I laugh gently at her predujice and multiple attempts to get me to bicker - a fine art developed on the CB by drivers. My ex used to say how much I nagged at him and argued with him, but I know that he never experienced the level of arguing and fighting as I had with men on the highways on the radio. They were ten times as bad as any women group of cluckers, henpecking their ways. And she was one of them!

I tried to change the subject

As I folded my clothes I tried to steer her away from her anti-US diatribes and was saying just how much I missed being a girl - "Hey look, see, I do have a few feminine things!" and I pulled up a pink shirt with ruffles and held it up, admiring for 2 seconds then it got folded.

And I began to hustle to get my laundry done. More examples of arguing attempts. And I thought 'So no wonder you've only been driving alone those decades, I thought, your heart is full of hate, and you gotta stay away from us all. You've been on the back BC roads too long, Hon.'

"Well, I have found the use of some feminine things too." She said as I'm about to split.

"What's that?" I say grabbing my basket in my arms off the washer.

"I've even got a use for tampons in your brake pot."

I dropped my basket onto the washer with a *clank*.

"How's that?"

(*Oh, this one is for you, Short Fuse!*)

"Look, if you've got a leak, you just get a tampon and stick it up there."

I studied her face intently, there was not a trace of laughter in it; she had twenty-nine freckles, two small scars, a host of blackheads, but no humor. Couldn't she *hear* what she was saying? Couldn't she hear how she sounded? But after a few minutes of her explanation, her complete lack of humor added to my mirth - luckily a washer lid hid my shaking tummy.

"Stick it up there? *Where?*"

"In the lines to your break pot." She snapped just a tidge.

"Oh, of course..."

"You get your glad hands and then shove it up there and... [explain more] and that'll stop any leaks."

"Really?"

"Then, once you're done and can get to a garage, you just get it removed?"

"Eh?"

"Yeah, you just go right up to the mechanics and ask them to remove your tampon."

And though I still use the *Koolatron* cooler she recommended, I have *stuck* to the traditional uses of tampons.

Chinatown, San Fransisco

The most preposterous place to go in a truck, but I had a delivery and a craving for Chinese for and I went over the Bay bridge - I'd been on every part of I-80 now - all 3400 miles of it and down into the peninsula I went and found my shipper. My tummy was talking to me now and it was speaking Chinese.

I pulled onto the street in the very middle of it and checked in, they pointed out the dock and looked at me very doubtfully as to whether I could get her in the for construction was being done - there was a huge dirt pile on one side of the hole, and - I'm not making this up folks - a beautiful polished black Porsche on the other.

One thing I might have mentioned a time or two, was that I always liked to dress well, even if just driving all by myself all day and I was in shorts, but made up, earrings, hair, and even long nails. I'm not narcissitic, I hope, and I mention this because its an element to this story, for as I went back to the rear of my trailer to slide the tandems to the safest spot, I had gathered up a crowd of onlookers, including the upper managent about eight good looking businessmen in suits of the firm I was delivering to had emptied out of their office to watch me back in.

Being from a theatrical family, a shot at performance always brought out the best in me and I dramatically slid that trailor off the street and back in there, going right over part of the pile of dirt as I did and missing the Porsche by a foot or so. And when I got done, I got out to do something or rather – they all stood there applauded me!

I went in to inquire about Chinese food and they were all smiling broadly at me

((OH NO! What did I do now!!))

(Are they mad I smooshed their dirt pile?)

(Are my undies hanging out??)

“Yeah, we just had to see the girl with the long nails back up into that hole!” and I got my Chinese food and, the tiniest taste of celebrity! Y'know sometimes this job could be just grand!

Canibalism

Okay, let's get this straight, The Donner Party turned to cannibalism to survive the Donner Pass one deadly winter in 1888.

It's a deadly pass that jumps up from Reno and then rollercoasts and winds for more than a hundred miles and dumps you off in Sacramento. It's dangerous. I've chained up on six inches of packed snow on it.

But, I am not allowed to idle on that pass – even to keep warm or anywhere in California – even if I run out of hours up there and the temperature falls to minus seven. Last I checked, Freightliner didn't install fire places yet, and they forestry dept. of California probably doesn't want me choppin down trees – (that smoke pollutes too, Arnold!!) This deadly pass is right behind Sacramento too; near Arny and his cronies, surely all the very green rule makers DRIVE up there on weekends at times, and SEE and feel!

They actually state no idling and that includes generators like our APUs. What about RVs? They state it in strong language. They sound pretty darn unmercifully green/mean in color.

Now, I know that the DOT (Dept. of Trucking) doesn't enforce that rule so much, but why make the rule in the first place that makes me break the law to stay alive??? Did they give the Donner Party a ticket? Surely they could post-date the citation – to the survivors' families.

They ate each other on Donner Pass, but I am not allowed to idle up there?

"That's truck-ing!! " Some fool was saying in an annoying voice:
"That's Truck-ing!"

Meteorite

I went many times by Roswell New Mexico, and the real mystery of Area 51 it still perplexes me – if there's nothing there, then why such secrecy?

But something extraterrestrial did happen to me nearby – sort of.

I was driving one of my very longest trips yet all the way from McAllen, Texas to Vancouver, British Columbia – 2900 miles, almost all of it back country, except for Boise and until I went over the Snoqualmie Pass in Washington and hit the Tacoma and Seattle region. The fabulous trip made me feel rewarded ("I'm a super-trucker now! Oh! I'm supertrucker now!!) and special in a way, special, like the eagle swooping down in front of me on Tehachapi Pass - An Indian stroke of good luck.

Out of a clear moonlit night, on the loop outside of Roswell, with no other vehicles on the road, on top my Century a single, rock hard:

"Thwack!"

Wow! Nothing other than a meteorite -- wait! ---Unless, of course, an eagle was having indigestion.

And, Man, I do feel lucky

That ostriches can't fly.

Or maybe it was an alien dung

Flung far from the sky!!

So, how do you know where you're going every day?

This is the truck driver, who takes the load on down the road.

How does he know where to go?

This is the Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
To the driver, who takes the load on down the road.

Oh.

This is the Load Planner, who Plans the load, who gives it to the
Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
Who gives it to the Driver,
Who drives the load on down the road.

This is the Customer Service Rep, who takes down the load
And gives it to the Load Planner, who Plans the load, who gives it to
the

Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
Who gives it to the Driver,
Who drives the load on down the road.

This is the Broker, who brokers the load who gives it to
The Customer Service Rep, who takes down the load for:
The Load Planner, who Plans the load, who gives it to the
Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
Who gives it to the Driver,
Who drives the load on down the road.

This is the DAT Board that advertises some loads
This is the Broker, who brokers the load who gives it to
The Customer Service Rep, who takes down the info for:
The Load Planner, who Plans the load, who gives it to the
Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
Who gives it to the Driver,
Who drives the load on down the road.

This is the Shipper
Who actually has a load, that gives it to the
DAT Board that advertises some loads
This is the Broker, who brokers the load who gives it to
The Customer Service Rep, who takes down the info for:
The Load Planner, who Plans the load, who gives it to the
Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
Who gives it to the Driver,
Who drives the load on down the road.

This is the Consignee (Receiver) whom is owed a load is owed from
This is the Shipper
Who actually has a load, that gives it to the
DAT Board that advertises some loads
This is the Broker, who brokers the load who gives it to
The Customer Service Rep, who takes down the info for:
The Load Planner, who Plans the load, who gives it to the
Dispatcher (Fleet Manager) who dispatches the load
Who gives it to the Driver,
Who drives the load on down the road.

And this is the house that JACK built!!

Angels and true miracles on the highway

A Christmas Eve Miracle in Baltimore

1864 in Baltimore, Maryland

Now, I'd been burnt to a crisp many a time, and like just about all female drivers, I'd given up for good talking on the CB, *for good*. We'd literally be driven off it, I guess the guys don't like our company. I wouldn't even listen to it, anymore.

But this one time I had to roll on Christmas Eve - to impress my dispatcher, Scott, and to get the huge bonus of (after taxes) about \$35 dollars, which would really help pay off all those Student Loans for sure. (Actually the year before I had *bobtailed* 900 miles a gift from Scott for running Xmas, which I got a bonus for per mile). And this year I decided to ignore all the ninnies on the air and I actually talked on air very briefly, wishing people a Merry Christmas.

And then I hung up the mike and was concentrating on my trip into Baltimore, and because it was foggy. There I was several hours later driving along the loop, singing along, merrily to myself:

"I wish me a Merry Xmas..."

"I wish me a Merry Xmas..."

"I wish me a Merry Xmas..."

When out of the blue, though I swore to not do so anymore, I reached up and turned the CB switch on:

"Southbound! Southbound!!!"

"Go ahead." What's wrong?

"Southbound!! There's a tanker stalled in the granny lane at the 29! No Flashers on at all!!!! Southbound side!!"

And as he said this I came around a hard bend, in dense fog, right in my path! A fuel tanker with no emergency lights on at all!!!!

I swerved and I missed.

And then shaken, I went to thank the Northbound guy, but he was already out of range, and I marveled that I did something I would never do! For it was nothing outside of a miracle, my Christmas Eve miracle on the highway, that year!

Mare gets fit

I have another miracle to report that happened out here on the road although it's not as spectacular as the one above:

I lost weight. For over two decades since my nine-pounder bowling ball of a baby boy was born, I've longed for to lose those extra pounds I packed on with that kid (He's over 6'3 tall now!) I prayed about it, I walked I came up with timing my food and eating a handful of non carb foods every five hours. I used my trucking count down timer - to count backwards for our mandatory ten hour breaks) I set it for five hours. I ate canned chicken at the end of the five hours. I set it again. I ate salad or cheese after the next five. The timer put control back into my hands. Also, the less carbs I ate the less APPETITITE I had!!

As I slenderized, as my vision got clear, as I felt light on my feet, I felt great. And I took a lot of pride in that I *COULD DO IT*. Ultimately though, like most strengths, it came from above, because I couldn't do it before He gave me strength to ... I'd tried many decades to before!

And:

I'm no longer a believer
In food as a reliever

Too much, it's poison, and a burden.
Just right, benefiting and energetic to the whole.

Some miracles are kinder and cloaked while others are brand spanking Wal-Mart-new and bold, whichever they are, they are wonderful and fill my heart with thanksgiving.

"Sir, The Earth is still Round"

I was actually telling this to the Washington State Police! My electronic logs which suddenly stopped and restarted and that my paper logs didn't seem to make sense. And the logs had resumed their electronic monitoring me when I was in the middle of the Canadian Rocky Mountains - Banff, where I couldn't stop and restart my paper logs. I didn't catch this because it was a very snowy day and I was concentrating on my driving - you know, on things like *safety* and such and so, now I had two different sets of logs, which I simply had not log corrected yet. I was running low on hours and tired, that's all. I wanted to do the paperwork more refreshed.

"You have two sets of logs."

"Well, you see, I went over the horizon. And my electronic logs simply stopped."

"So you're saying the satellite failed." He said, sure that I was lying and trying to catch me in it.

"No sir, not exactly. Qualcomm's satellites don't reach the Northern Latitudes - I just went up to Edmonton, Alberta. Its five hundred miles North of the boarder."

"Well your company needs to get that fixed."

"No, sir, with all due respect, all trucking companies use the Qualcomm satellites."

"Well somebody is going to need to fix that." He said, still sure this was only a trucking company failure.

"Well that's going to be kind of hard, because..." I could see he was writing me a ticket anyway so I went on being a smart @ss "...Because, the Earth is still round sir."

He kept on writing and writing and writing. Not listening too much, thank God. I ranted on recklessly:

"Qualcomm uses a geostationary orbiting satellite (I had used satellites a lot in the Navy, in weather and hurricane tracking). These satellites don't reach above Calgary, Alberta. (In fact, they often cut in and out in the town ironically named 'Airdrie, AB' of all things, although this time they waited until I got to Banff, I don't know why.) They'd either have to launch a new satellite into orbit - which is fairly costly - or move the one that's up there over - again, fairly costly - something a kin to a Star Wars movie, even. Or, somehow they could make the earth not so round, and that seems a bit tough to do in today's economy." So no wonder I got the ticket, eh!

Ah, if he only knew! Off the electronic leash I'd actually gotten MORE sleep than the 10 required by law - and on my terms too - like at night - Duh! Like when I was tired - Duh! And in other reasonable ways...Duh! I always had slept more than they insisted!! They had reamed me relentless about production, but when I got a chance to rest, eh, I mean take a safety break, boy, did I!

I had many acquaintances up there, by now and I had leisurely hung out with them, Canadian drivers are very chummy! And then, without asking, or begging, I drove to the World's Largest Mall - The West Edmonton Mall, parked my rig in the RV parking... and, I smirk, I was enjoying pink flamingos and seals, and indoor three masted galleon, I had my choice of fifty restaurants including a piano bar, maybe a thousand shops, indoor rollercoaster, and last but not least - 'The Beach'.

It was an indoor swim park, with waves and slides and bungee drops and there was I in the middle of winter, smirking while I was

swimming and having a splendid time!! None of it caught by logs. Because although I was swimming and relaxing, I'd have to get parked by a time limit of fourteen hours - who wants to watch the clock on their fun, their day off? And I couldn't get a reasonable thing like 'Personal Drive Time' because that could take me off the available list for the next load. I was thus imprisoned in my truck in other words! I simply wanted to have fun while I waited for a load, and the way things were that I was basically in prison in my truck in the truck stop. However sometimes this was a good thing, because with the focus one gets from having few distractions like malls can really help a writer.

The DOT officer kept on jotting, sure I was guilty of something.. and I was, you see, guilty of relaxing and having a good time before I had to make a *fifteen hundred mile trek across endless mountain ranges in winter* to Santa Clara, California.

They lost track of the issue - it's supposed to be about safety and not about endless rule breaking, or shall I say the real issue is Controlling us, not safety. A Wal-Mart driver I'd met used to shoot 9 rounds of golf every day, until the logs made that impossible. You **have to save up the free off time to get loaded or unloaded or for troubles like traffic, weather and etc!** No more free time like that to shoot your trap or do nine holes! No more stopping in a restaurant to eat! No time for that! I ate behind the wheel five straight years!!!! How is that safe?? The exquisite pleasure of travelling and seeing our great big country have been outlawed and I was very bitter about that for many, many years, until I found my sense of humor kicked the bitterness in the arse (See Mommy Qualcomm).

And at times I found opportunities to stop and see the things I loved - using the logs in a way so as to force it to happen - all in the name of 'Safety'. And whenever you need something really bad, you just have to use that magical word '**SAFETY**' AND ALL TROUBLES VANISH AS IF by MAGIC. Or perhaps you jerry rigged a light until you got to a cool spot, then suddenly it needed fixing like nobodies' business, because it was so *unsafe*.

And I was having a totally great time, so good that it felt so bad. But what was wrong with relaxing here and there, when I had the chance? IT'S A SAFETY ISSUE, FOLKS! And a fine time I had - And the logs would have stopped it from happening had they been working up there!!

But the part I relish the most about this story the most is saying as straight as possible to the State Trooper: "Sir, the Earth is still round."

The Shoes in a tree

This story, too, is very unpleasant of the short time that I spent trying to please my new dispatcher after Scott disappeared on me one day after two years of wonderful service. In fact, if anyone would say the magical word ‘Please’ (Or, in France, I mean Quebec ‘Seafood Plate’) and be nice I would go overboard for them. And so I took on a Student one day for my new guy, Neal.

We had unbelievable good loads! They were round trip circuit loads for FedEx and UPS and they were the unprecedented length of FIVE THOUSAND MILES EACH! We’d start out in Reno, go to Cheyenne, Denver, Dallas, Phoenix, Fontana, Calif and back up to Reno. What an opportunity to make money and have my student get her miles in. But I still made sure that she was well trained – for I hadn’t been at all and I could barely drive when I first started out and I certainly could not back up to any hole on my first time out as a new graduate.

And, for no other reason to train somebody as Short-Fuse had trained me – basically over the phone over the many years, I sought to ‘pay it forwards’ and train her well as Short Fuse had helped me. And when she needed to go to the bank, I got the big rig to a branch in several big cities, which, as anyone can appreciate, was not easy – but she did not. And we got along, but she did not appreciate this either; all she could think about was that I was not training her fast enough despite the unprecedented circuit loads, she really had no idea how good she had it.

And one day, out of pure lack of sleep – she had been talking to her boyfriend instead of sleeping, she lost it big time and had been threatening me. I let her go to sleep and while she slept I got dispatch to re-route me to a terminal where I would let her off my truck.

When she woke up we were inside the building and safely in the safety aisle and I tried to be professional saying, “I’m terribly sorry, but this is not working out for me.”

“OH, No! you’re not allowed to do this!” She was very shocked, for now, she’d *really* be slowed down while she went to the back of the line for female trainers and would wait for weeks now. I would give her the lowest ratings possible. And she became abusive. And was calling her Student Manager and using abusive language about me.

“Oh, no. I’m not gonna be abused in my own truck!” up to this point I’d kept my cool, for many, many weeks that I trained her. “Nobody bad mouths me in my own truck! Get the hell off my truck!”

“Oh you can’t do this!”

“Oh yes I can!!” And I yelled “Security!” I called. I had chosen this spot well!

And they came, used to this, they were prepared and I stood back, arms crossed, hostilely gazing making sure she took nothing of mine.

I went to sleep in the lot. Well, at least I had mostly done well, but my last action had spoiled it all for myself, as richly deserving as it was and so I was depressed. I had let other’s drag me down again. And there was a knock on the door. It was the Safety Officer whom I written a big report on my student. She said my ex-student had left some possessions on board. And I gave them to her. A few hours of sleep went by and I woke up and saw that my students big, ugly and manish track shoes were still aboard somehow.

I laugh now when I think of my childish actions that came next: I tied the shoes together and threw them in a tree right by the smokers break area, where, years later, they still reside to this day, where an employee can see them while taking a smoke break and wonder what the story is behind that.

And in fact one can see them still dangling there from the freeway – a peculiar little habit or hobby even of mine – like birdwatching – I would crane my head to see them, as I flew by the terminal over the years. And I never saw her again, I doubt she made it out here, even though I had trained her well. Her shoes, however, outlasted her for my friend, Jimmy the Mac Man went there one day recently and took pictures of the shoes that still dangle, a silly banner for my childish vengeance, however, despite this immaturity on my part, they still never cease to bring a smile to my face and, well, a laugh as I think of them still dangling there.

I laugh at what this says about me:

Watch out - if you tick me off,

I might throw your shoes in a tree!

Potty

Believe it or not I have been asked about this very personal subject, but to answer it once and for all, let me relate to you a Day in the Life of a trucker:

You wake up DEAD asleep, for, you had pulled in a as the sun was arising – and finally others' were moving on out so you can get a parking spot and not be "Homeless" for the night (I.e. on the on ramp of I-80) and you were so tired, you set your brakes and dove into your bed, hardly taking your shoes off, as you flew amidst air.

Now of course three hours later, you're still so very tired. But you wake up, now YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO THE BATHROOM! So, you drag yourself a quarter of a mile of dirty, filthy, potholed truckstops with patches of slick but filthy ice, puddles, trash and panhandlers, lot lizzards, past hundreds of roaring trucks, where men sit at their wheels and observe and yak all about you on the CB.

Mission thus complete, you walk all the way back through that and lay your weary butte back down. The sun is hot and shiny and after two hours of just looking up at the bulkhead, you drift off. But your Qualcomm beeps several times with routine, annoying deprecating safety messages, in which you want to punch the thing. I actually got one that said "We told you so". Ironically the Safety Fad this season is to nag us about getting enough rest, which they've just broken.

Finally rested hours later, you get up, because YOU'VE GOT TO GO THE BATHROOM. Repeat above long process.

After many hours of waiting, you get a load. You check out your rig, on your pretrip inspect, she looks good. You make yourself your own coffee in your truck – *aren't you clever* – and plan your load out,

while sipping on just about the only legal pleasure out there, (other than chocolate) and now, supertrucker, you are ready to roll on out!

But, first, YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, that Java has gone right through you. But - aren't you're clever, you *drive* to the fuel aisle, where you can park for a bit to do your business. You grab another cup of java for the road.

Now you roll on out, your customer is hours away but the coffee singes your tummy - and a caffeine high!! WEEEEEEE! This is FUN on coffee!!! And you're going along real good for a few hours when YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO THE BATHROOM. And you look on your atlas when the road is not too crazily curving for your next potty - or I say 'Rest Area', where you can "rest" your bladder real good.

And you see it there at milepost 324 and do the math, it's forty-three miles away... oh boy, so you consult your itty-bitty truckstop guide and refer to the print with your onboard microscope, but the road rattles you too much to read it and rather than risk looking at the tiny print again to find another truckstop, or input a Walmart into your GPS.

Once you finally get to the rest area, though cars can "rest" themselves at about a hundred percent of all exits, you find that this one says "CARS ONLY!" on it! And as you pass it now belly getting taught, you see it is occupied by four cars, the rest of the area is completely empty, for cars have chosen GAS STATIONS all along all highways to do their 'resting.' where they can buy candy and junk.

So, I go another ten miles - this one is a REAL rest area - for trucks, and alas you see even a spot adjacent to the restroom, and just as you're about to swing into it, you see that it is occupied by, believe it or not, a car. I can't tell you how many times this has happened to me, and Smokey was nearby didn't even give him a darn parking ticket!!!

Now I can't go to the bathroom because of that! Boy would I get ticked, but Smokey never cites these guys and then the onramps get filled up with weary trucks and *these guys get tickets*, but the cars in our spots do not!! I've seen some cars parked so expertly as to block the swing for ten trucks to park!! That's ten poor guys who can't use the restroom or sleep. Though we are relentlessly henpecked like you can't believe to get enough sleep, yet the DOT never cites cars parked in our spots so that we can!!

So I drive on. My shippers not too far away, and I am a lady, or trying to be, so I decide to wait it out some more instead of pulling onto the shoulder of the onramp. We've been HOUNDED like you would not believe on our safety messages not to pull off on shoulders - ever! You can get fired doing that. And, although I can be a half reb, and out side the box thinker, I actually try to comply So I get back on the highway. I am a good little girl - *today!*

As soon as I do I realize my big mistake - to heck with company policy!! -- for, an accident or construction is tying the entire road up and my short jaunt to the shipper now takes another weary hour.

And now I have city streets to wind through carefully while my bladder is about exploding. I button-hook her around real tight right turns and go over sidewalks to get her around fire hydrants and stop signs - suddenly my full bladder is becoming a real apparent safety issue, Mr or Mrs DOT!

But *ten years later* I finally get to the gate of my shipper, there's a long line of trucks waiting to enter. I can barely lean over to slide tandems back, and they stick and I have to beg another driver to yank them handle while I rock it, before they'll let me on in. I thank him. I give the guards them all their pickup numbers, etc and fly over to the shipping office.

"Oh, we don't have facilities for *truck drivers*." As if we all have leprosy, or something.

"Well, do you have facilities for Engineers?"

"Huh?"

"That's what I did before driving a truck!" I snap. But, they direct me to drive to across the warehouse, but I can't make it. I double park and run over underneath a trailer - and I water their place for free! It stinks up a place if there's no dirt to cover it and mask the smell, I observed from my cat's kitty litter box so I bury it in dirt, and I hate that, but this was not my choice. I have actually pulled on the shoulder of I-5 and blocked one lane a major highway in Houston for my emergency, which wouldn't have been an emergency if our sleep and sanitary needs were properly cared for by the DOT!! So, how do you spell safety anyway - B.O.L.O.G.N.A. Bull-loney!

So there you have it. Are you disgusted to hear what I've really had to do? Could you do this life style? In it is an inherent downcast beat to it, that truck drivers were lowly disgusting old men to do this job. But what I've just described was a typical day. It makes me sad sometimes, it makes me cry, and sometime's then I just giggle and remember the cubicle-cell I used to work in and I try not to drink so much coffee. But alas it was my one joy.

On a serious note: there's no doubt that we've all had to use 'equipment' other than toilets to dispose of our human waste byproducts, at times, however the sort that leaves those piss bottles full everywhere has done more to discredit our profession than just about anything else!! There's not that many of us who do such disgusting things - but it only takes just one - out of thousands of decent drivers - to throw us out of parking near a mall (Ontario Mills

Mall, CA) Just empty the darned bottle in the grass or on dirt, like a cat or dog would do to mask the scent, and rejoin the human race!!

& Down the Coquihalla

Walt was telling me that I might be stuck up in Edmonton because the only load that they did have was going through British Columbia - in the dead of winter and the driver would be needing to chain up. In short, though he was a swell dispatcher, he didn't think I could or would do such a load.

But I said nonchalantly "Oh, I can chain up Walt."

Stunned silence "You have chains with you?"

"Sure, Walt, I checked them out in the Terminal."

"Mary, you are going to have to be very careful. They just had a big blizzard up there."

"Okay, Walt."

"Wow! Okay! Well, I'll pipe that load right over to you then!" he said and gave me the shipper and etc. And from that point on, I could do no wrong in the book of Walt! Its was worth a blizzard or two!!

First I got lunch. I met the Truck stop chaplain in one of my top favorite truck stops in North American - the Road King in Edmonton, Alberta - on the The Trans Canadian Highway 16. Describe.

It was a wonderful pleasant dinner I had, and I told him that I really need prayers because I was going to go down the Infamous Coquilhalla - a deadly, and long pass near Kamloops, British Columbia in the deadly Canadian Winter bound for a border cross near Vancouver, BC and then on down to Mt. Shasta Lake, California. (I saw later a TV show was made about this road!!!) We prayed, and then I checked my email as we visited and ate together - I got an email - a lady that I'd been praying for had just gotten a kidney transplant! And it was once the matched her so perfectly, the donor could have been her twin! This was a true miracle and I praised God for it with the pleasant Chaplain and then went back out into the blizzard.

"Oh God, help me!" I cried out, as I looked on my dash gauge: the temperature was -4 F (or 36 below freezing) and falling! I sensed, spiritually that danger was a coming, though I'd been down that pass before several times and I couldn't hold out for perfect conditions across a stretch of 1500 mountainous miles all winter so, I knelt by my truck and there in the snow, while fueling in the Fly (Flying J) next door, I lay hands on my Cascadia and drew crosses in the salty dirt all over my truck.

And David encouraged himself - in the Lord..

And I took off.

As I left westward for the Canadian Rockies past Edmonton towards Jasper Pass - where I'd seen longhorn Rams right on the TCH 16, but today, as if to brace me, nature through a blizzard at me as I was still even in downtown Edmonton.

[more!]

Don't Mix:

Trucking and Botanical Gardens, I hate running over Pansies! They decorate The Hole so nicely too, but I'm really tired of smooshing Pansies!

Japanese Ornamental Cherry Trees - and The "Hole" one has got to go!

Trucking and Bountiful Industrial Parks - with a high Freight Turnover "All the grass and trees - like a Golf Course! are just too *per-ty* for all them nasty ol' trucks!"

Women and Directions - and I am a Woman myself, but alas I never ask a NON CDL holding woman for Truck directions! Tigard, Oregon Shipper took my off a standard truck route, to go alongside the elementary school where her Grandkids go. A variation on the theme of don't mix trucking and school kids, trucking and schools, trucking and daycare, etc. I have seen these all!!

European Sports Cars and The Hole, or, well any nice car you don't want *redesigned*!

Trucking and Manicures: I.E. Getting the Big Rig in the Salon Parking Lot

{This also applies to Trucking and Hair Salons and any other kind of Salon *not* right next to a Mall or Wal-Mart Supercenter}

And:

Crying and Trucking

("There's no crying in Trucking!")

My House

After almost five years on the road, and trying to get off of it through my mother's house where a savage molester lived, in the end all I had to do was go to Grocery Store and I found a house not too far away at all, and that very day my guy friend Scott in his truck, though he was tremendously tired from many weeks of driving, came and helped me get moved all in.

I was the one Werah - they tell me this means blondy- okay, Gringa-in a house with nine other Hispanic Folks, but it was a big spacious house and carpeted wall to wall. At first I felt a bit

different, of course, but as I got to know the guy running the house, Ben, I realized that he was an exceptional person, fair, kind, and of course compared to my mother's husband, even the hardcore felons like Carmen and Allegra came out good in the comparison.

But Ben became my good friend, to this day, he had a fantastic sense of humor, and while I earnestly looked for any kind of work, we watched all the World Cup Games and then we all watched the Novellas: Soy tu Duena (I'm your master!) and Rosario Tijeras (Rosie the Sizzorer).

My good friend Short-Fuse swung by from the Road and just gave me some money and I was so happy to see him. But weeks went by without work, and after several months, I knew the road was beckoning me once again!

Back in Quebec

So, I was back to long hauling and happy to be so - and my new dispatcher - Walt - was a longtime trucking veteran, who loved the fact that I went into Canada. And my first few loads I'd enter in British Columbia, exit in the next province or two over and then re-enter/repeat - sooner than I expected - what, maybe fourteen days? - I found myself entering Quebec from Upstate New York!

I'd been there before, but this time was like new, for some reason - like leaving behind big ugly vile molesters.

Besides it was a job that I loved anyway and I'd read humorous books: "A merry heart makes good, like medicine" - which, believe it or not, set me into a giggly kind of mood when I crossed the border north again.

First thing I saw, mind you, were not Parisian Boulevards - but, well, cows! Montreal was not too far away and I had not expected that, and after getting through a snappy Pakistani Customs official, I found myself saying to myself:

"Cows?"

"Well, Mare, everyone has to have agriculture - even Ze French." I answered myself.

Distracted with the scale at hand, I had pictured people eating *fromage* with berets on and tiny little chateaux dotting the landscape quaintly as can be

And I answered back myself as the Canadiennes DOT weighed me "But what language do the cows speak?"

"Parlez Moo?" I answered Mare back and I began laughing realizing what I said and the scale master and the French all around must've thought I was a bit off...

"And the ducks? Parlez vous Quacque-Quacque?"

Let me dust off my highschool French, let's see, Oh, um how do I say Yes and no. Well, no, that's easy, its: NON, only you don't ever say any ending letters - it's wrong! So you say NO just like you do in English, just don't tell them that, cuz it's illegal to speak English in France. And, um, yes is Oui, oui or in English 'wee wee.'

After that, all was funny! I drove into the city of Montreal - Oh the signs, how funny! It's illegal to have anything in English (even just miles to the US border), and so I found myself saying every zing wiz ze Francaise accente! I felt weird even zinking in ze English!

It's a city where they've set the freeways below ground and you often go under many bridges, and my GPS declared suddenly:

"LOST"

"Oh? You too?" I was shocked at her admission! But we were in France, after all, eh, I mean, Quebec.

"...Satellite Reception."

"Ah! You just can't admit a mistake!"

Speaking of my GPS - of whom I named "Judy" - Judy Garmind, I am pretty impressed with her ability to remain professional with me at all times - especially after all those cussings and fussings (Hey! I never claimed to be anywhere near Perfect, USA) but, yes, alas, when she puts me in a fix, I confess, I cuss her out soundly!!! And she never replies with anything other than "Take-A-U-Turn." Bless her electronical little heart.

And I talk to her, cuz I'm a bit lonely, because it's two dollars a minute to roam north of the border and well, Jude is my kinda volleyball, y'know like Tom Hanks had in that movie "Cast Away":

"Hey Judy, how come you're not parlying the Fransay! We're in Quebec!"

"Oh, poop, now I have to do a U turn, Jude, cuz you were distracting me!"

Back to the French - alas, Madame Brechbiel would be proud - for I was one of her few high school students that were actually using what she taught us in the classroom in a practical manner for work! And so at the next truck stop I bought *Un café* and proceeded up to the counter - with Canadian Loonies and Two-nies - and in my best French vis-a-vis Madame Brechbiel I said:

"Bonjour."

"Hi, how are you?" she said ringing up my coffee. I swore I had time travelled to LA instantaneously.

"How did you know I speak English?" I asked. "Do I not look French?" I said glancing at all my Wal-mart clothes - I'd just come from a Wal-mart in Quebec and bought them there. And in fact all

those genealogies my family did showed quite a few prominent French names. Did I not look French? But that wasn't the case:

"No you said it wrong."

"Bonjour?" I had said 'bonjour' wrong?

"Yes."

Ah, so much for Madame Brechbiel! But alas, her French did help me with basic words Yes, No, Thank You: (*Oui, Non, Merci*), and of course the Magical Word my Mommy taught me: 'Seafood Plate' (*S'il vous Plait*) if you're really in a fix... and thanks to the exuberant Madame I didn't feel so lost amongst the French, eh, the French Canadiennes, eh, I mean the Québécois (my spell checker suggested that last word). Whatever!

Trucuts and Shortcuts

Are not the same thing I found out as I saw signs everywhere advising a 'Trucut' on the 15 (ze quinze) that heads straight for the New York border. And even though it is illegal to pronounce endings of words in France, 'Cut' (Or Cue) is never a good thing in regards to thru- roads across the border. But, (or 'Bue' as they say in France), bue Since I didn't know what 'trucut' truly meant, I assumed that to take it was doing alright, for if it didn't mean shortcut, it probably meant 'detour' which sounded French enough, so I wondered why they didn't use that word. It wouldn't be illegal to say an English word that had been derived from the French, would it?

'Trucut' it turns out means that the road has been CUT! (Cue) Literally! P0000F! (pooo) The lane launched into nowhere in the heart of Montreal! I cried out and then, fully loaded, began to *tango* - *is that French?* - across at least five lanes to get to the 'Sortir' - following a tiny l'orange 10 centimeter sign, on the ground, a kilometer down on the far side of the freeway! Truly!

And then those French, how they flew the nice international peace signs at me with their fingers:

How elegant their manners...

How thoughtful...

How French!

And then I deadheaded back to Montreal and got a load from Montreal to the far eastern side of Quebec - in the very quaint and European city of Lac Magantic - close to the US/Maine Border.

My load wasn't ready until the next day, so I suited up heavily for cold winter and went for a delightful walk in the old bricked city and the snow began to fall in Canadian Loony/Two-nie-sized flakes. And I marveled at the quaint place I was in and that I could have a merry disposition, even all that had happened to me. But I still had this marvel: to be merry, to be amazed by life, and that I

was free and that I had a life: because of laughter and not letting others drag me down, nor was I hurting others. I only wanted to help others, and in this I was marvelously free. O what a beautiful place this was, and I was so free! Lac Magantic*

"Living good is the best revenge." Someone had once said, I think in a movie, and it was so true enough to be in the Big Book! To Laugh, to help others, to hurt nor offend anyone, and to drink life in that God gave me, worshipping him, that was true wonder, that I didn't have a heart of hate no more, but, thousands of miles away, I was indeed free.

And I took the load back over the border and a series of a few long trips, I found myself back in California again in a matter of a week or so. Culture shock: French, New York, Chicago, Midwest, Utah, Nevada and then the Hispanic neighborhood where I lived and regaled my roommates of my cross continental journeys.

(* A most somber final foot note on the village of Lac Magantic I read in *Time Magazine* article: A most terrible fire from a runaway railroad car took most of this jewel and numerous people all away - off the face of the Earth in July of 2013)

Some Laughs

Some lines of laughter I actually thought of whilst driving, none of them true, bless m'soul:

"Oh, no sir, I'm not driving. I AM parking - I'm parking down the hammerlane at sixty miles an hour."

"Yessir, I am on line one - outside my truck. My ENTIRE left hand is outside of my truck."

"Actually, Sir, my real job is a fiction writer." I say as I hand the officer my cooked books. (a joke for I only had unbreakable electronic logs)

"I don't lie, sir! Both of my logbooks tell the truth!"

You know you're a trucker When

You swing wide-

When you're walking around a corner

When You duck when you cross under a low bridge -

In your car

When you use the 'Trucks Okay' lane in Cali and do 55, though when in a car you can move over and do 70!

When you're at home in bed and you remember

To get up and -

Put yourself on line 2

When you wine "Oh I just wanna go home?"

And you mean the next Petro down the interstate.

When you wait two hours to pee and

You're just tootling around town in your car.

When you feel your bottoms on the ground in a car

When you don't own the interstate anymore when

You get home.

You feel Ordinary without your bigrig in the lot

Six hundred miles is just a good working productive day's work not a weeklong vacation

Blood

And my Yankee Angels

I was to be taking another load across the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit up into northern Ontario - a beautiful trip I'd taken many times by now and taken rest breaks of the Shores of Lake Huron and Huntsville and Penetanguishene, Ontario.

When I got up to Toledo, I noticed that I didn't feel well and I drug myself 40 miles further to the Detroiter Truck stop in Woodhaven, MI, near to the bridge and the border.

I managed to get backed in I could barely move the handle - it was so cold, so I thought I'd back up off the ice and "Boom!" I just about dropped the entire trailer to the ground! Now I really couldn't raise it - so I had to leave the trailer like that - poor next driver

- and I managed to check myself into the motel in the truck stop and collapse. I left a last message to dispatch: not feeling good, get someone else to get load. Going to motel.

When I woke up I could barely move I was in agony, and it was all I could do to dial 911.

The ambulance came, and loaded me on a stretcher and away I went with sirens, and the pain became agonizing - like I was in full labor again. I begged for medicine. Then agony, I believed it probably burst in the ambulance.

In the ER someone finally gave me morphine and I passed out and was fairly relaxed when an intern told me:

"You're appendix burst and we're going to have to resection your bowels."

'Did that mean weight loss?' I actually thought as the began to gas me.

But when I came out of the ER they had not had to completely redo my indoor plumbing but I was in agony and on pain meds and they took my up to my room. I found out that I was in a private hospital and had my own spacious room, internet, etc. not that I was interested in that. All's I wanted to do was sleep, but when I shut my eyes very vivid, colorful things like card decks, Caterpillar excavators and shrimp and jellyfish swam and undulated and pulsed on patterns upon my closed eyelids. Especially the card decks swum around to the middle eastern beat of a song I once heard - all the colorful Queen of Hearts, the Jack of Spades and aces, twos, three four of a kind and a royal straight flush spiraled all about. Later on I realized they were straight from *Disney's Alice in Wonderland* that I'd only seen once as a child. They were rather entertaining like having my own kaleidoscope, but I knew that they were just the morphine I'd been given. A week later they went away, bless me soul.

But I couldn't even call my company for I had not brought my cell phone charger. I was debating what in the world to do when a very nice gentleman and his wife appeared in my room. They introduced themselves as Bill and Cindy Vander_____, the owners of the truckstop, The Detrouiter. When they heard that an ambulance had come for me, in true Christian service, they came by to see if I needed anything...

(*All true names of my angels)

Well, I sure did and Bill - the owner, I'd gotten to know them, had come back the next day with a charger and Christian books to read - he had to go all over Woodhaven to find it, and this was not lost on me, so when I finally got a hold of my boss, I asked him to mention this to someone up high in my company.

When I mentioned Bills' name, it turned out that though separated by hundreds of miles, those two actually knew each other, and that my dispatcher had been instrumental in getting The Detrouiter as our drop yard. It was such a wonderful thing, then, to tell my dispatcher how this guy and his wife had visited me in the hospital and helped me when I had no one.

But that wasn't true, I did have even more help coming, even if I didn't know it at the time - as I lay helplessly in bed, swollen like an eight month pregnant mother. I knew I couldn't drive for some time and I called up my friend Jimmy, The Mac Man who lived way over in Jamestown, NY and he said I could stay at his house while I recovered. And he told our mutual friend Chuck, who, upon hearing my predicament, took off from Tampa, Florida to come all the way to Detroit, a thousand miles, to help me empty out my truck, so some stranger wouldn't.

But I didn't know that. As I lay there helplessly another angel entered my life: The accountant for the hospital! She came to collect my enormous bill!

"Mary, the VA is not accepting your card." Sue told me and started this agonizing long process of getting them to pay and in the mean time she asked me what in the world are you going to do about your truck?"

"I truly don't know! My company will send some stranger, some rookie driver to empty it out and all my things will get stolen."

But she had a college aged son, and I offered to pay him if he would empty it into a storage place. But she offered up her garage. A total stranger, she came by with her pickup truck with her son and they spent hours emptying my truck and putting it in her garage where it would stay, nicely, while I convalesced at my friends home way over in New York.

She had gone way out of her way to help me, as the others did, and someone once told me Northerners were cold and aggressive, but, almost heartbreakingly sweet, I found the complete opposite to be completely true, even my own family - I had told my aunt - and I heard from no one, yet here was Sue, Chuck and Jimmy helping me when I was finished! For later in talking to another Truck Stop Chaplain, of my story, one of the other Chaplains' wife had died of the very same thing.

After almost a week of work, Sue got them to pay my bills, and she became my friend and I visited her as I came back to Detroit for follow ups and we very pleasantly took her craft out on Lake Erie where we sailed into the middle of it and by a lighthouse! Wow what a neat gal!! she has continued to visit me in San Diego, every fall. Another year passed and we went zip lining in Catalina.

And I lay there a few more days, there appeared Chuck just in time to help, but Sue had already helped me, so instead we watched the Nascar races that I would missed due to this emergency - he had bought us two excellent tickets to the Fontana Speedway, and now, I wouldn't be able to go, but having a friend travel so far to help me, I felt my stomach begin to move and by the end of the first day he visited, I had done a huge turn around in my health. And the second day we watched the full final race - how exciting to watch it with a true fan, for, though I always liked it, I knew little about it. I told him that I would never forget his kindness to me, nor Sue's and Jimmy's.

I left the hospital a few days later for a bus bound for Eerie, Pa, where my friend Jimmy spent hours trying to get someone to come there and pick my up and his cousin came and I, of course gave her plenty of money for her gas and time.

And I spent the next few weeks at Jimmy's house while he was gone on loads, eating his food, walking many miles all over the icy town carefully as I could, to get better. And I sprung back to health, thanks to my angels. And I was travelling up to Rome, NY where I recovered a truck abandoned and kept on rolling!

And so what do I have to say about Yankees? They break my heart they are so sweet. God Bless You Yanks!! You've been given a bad rap, I see what you did for me and it was so sweet, may God always bless you for helping me, when no one in my entire family cared if I lived or died.

*All names are true
of my angels

* Also as a true

Californian, I'm not exactly where Yanks live, I thought it was anyone from East of the Mississippi and North of the Mason-Dixon?

Tailgators

I get various inspired ideas driving down the road like how to fix the national economy and how to stop tailgating for good. I have plenty of time to think on important things like that.

Install a camera in the back of you trailer or window of your car brazenly and one that records all kinds of Legal information, like speed, route, date, time, etc. Aim the camera at the license of the car behind you where they'd be if they were tailgating you. Have it turn on when you roll. Have a bumper sticker that says,

"This tailgating is being recorded for quality assurance and training purposes." And the camera should be quite obvious.

Then people can turn in those pesky tailgaters all they want - instead of performing any kind of road rage or, finger maneuver. They then get there much needed revenge. The tax payer gets the benefit for there are approximately Twenty Million cars out on the road, and just about all of them are tailgaters and so 20 mill times three hundred dollars a piece that is a payment to the national debt of 3 billion dollars per year. And of course then law enforcement budgets can be trimmed back and they'll be able to spend that on the national debt too! The big savings will be in the LACK OF ACCIDENTS and Cost of maintaining crash sites. I figger that's another clean bill In itself.

I think I'll write my Congressman on that!! On second thought maybe I had better sticks with writin' and joking - and of course, long haul truckin'.

On a serious note:

For anyone who just got through all my joking above I do have an inspired question to ask all of you, rhetorically:

Would you sacrifice your income tax return if you knew?

That every tax payer would be doing it and a hundred percent of it would go into paying off our national debt?

Would you do it?

I would. My country is an investment I make for myself and for my kids, and I have already served it in the Navy. Ask not what your country can do for you, but for what you would do for your country... oh, by the way JFK said that, not me.

Are we being colonized by our national debt? Is this an economic invasion we are facing? Business is war, Tzung zu said. Ah, but what does that have to do with trucking, well, it was the only decent job I could get, so you tell me.

Cruise California

This is another one of my idles of my bored brain, but I got the idea by watching the movie 'American Graffiti' and thought about bringing back the idea of Cruising to make it popular like in the movie - to slow folks down and enjoy the ride more, thus 'Cruise California' could be an ad campaign involving celebrities and the like to bring back riding, driving and travelling for the fun it could be. As I write this I see someone singing "Don't worry! Be Happy" and leaning back waving and enjoying. What fun we could bring back to the drive. Its so much safer to - and look how crazy all the folk look, when to cruise is to be cool! Cruise California (or any state) as if you owned it!

Cinderella Safety

At midnight you're suddenly "safe" to drive. Kinda reminds me of Cinderella – like all fairy tales everything magically vanishes at that hour, including, supposedly, your dead-dog tiredness from the endless miles, my friends.

GPS, Maptuit and other Electronical Fixes you can get into:

This section goes along well with the next one entitled "Tree Trimming and other Part Time Jobs one can do while trucking. That's just in case you're bored and all the high earning miles you're getting and want a part time hobby to accompany your travels and supplement your high income. These hobbies are especially beneficial to you if you ONLY follow your GPS or ONLY follow your Maptuit directions and not:

- Call the customer
- Call your 'Travel Agent' (Your dispatcher "Fleet Manager")
- Study your truckers atlas
- Yodel for help on the CB for other magicians, who can get you there like nobody's business!
- Go online to various site likes Google Earth Where you can even get Arial shots of how the guard shack sits, and even how to swing for your hole.
- Get out your compass and sextant
- Navigate by Polaris
- Call the fuzz or Smokey or the Polizei
- Send up smoke signals to your receiver
- Pray to God

One time I wanted to go the Petro Fuel stop right before the big pass commonly called out here by the name of "The Grapevine" so that I could sleep and go up the big pass in the cool of the night, so I typed into Judy the actual name of the town right by the Petro, which is 'The Grapevine' and continued driving. I knew it to be some fourty odd miles away. But when Judy came back with 8,500 miles I was astonished to find that she was routing me -- ocean and all -- to "The Graven, New South Wales" - Australia! As if I could get there in a truck! That would be a big ferry toll, for sure! Later on, I really would go to an island in my truck - a \$800 dollar trip to Vancouver Island.

Another amusing juxtaposition of technology happened to me when I had plugged in my laptop to play my downloaded music directly off my laptop and into my trucks stereo system and I had accidently left my Wifi antenna on "Automatic" and I must have been somehow still signed onto Yahoo

Chat for, as I was about to pull into a small, snowy Ohio truckstop after a long trip from West Virginny, just to fuel up my coffee cup and before I even got to it, way down the street my computers WIFI antenna went into the hotspot and I was getting real time online chat from a handsome guy I knew who was serving in the war in Iraq – at the time the very active battles! Still down the street, I leaned way over and quickly typed “Hi” to let him know I was there for him, “Hello from Mosul, how are you?” and leaned over and quickly typed “I am fine” as I got up to the light, and then swung wide to pull into the aisle he was writing me a long paragraph, telling me about a battle and some refugees he had met nearby – it was all so far away, a hot desert battle zone, and here was I in a small truckstop in snowy Ohio. “Oh what are you doing?” “Oh, nothing interesting like you - just driving a truck.”

Trucking and Tree-trimming and other financial Ventures

“Hey, I didn’t even take a pay!”

“Ah, that branch was hanging too low for a semi.”

“Some kid coulda got hurt, I did them a favor.”

And to the gracious black folk in Augusta, Georgia where because we’d just been hammered relentlessly on the Qualcomm about NOT doing ‘U’ turns I went into the their block to circumnavigate it around and in it had knocked down a large branch.

“Oh! I’ll clean it up!” I said popping out of my cab instantly and woefully – somewhere I had a hacksaw for cutting up bolt seals on the trailer somehow I’d make do.

“Oh, no she needed it trimmed up anyway.”

“Are you sure???” I was running late now that I’d missed the turn, and chopping up cherry trees, like G. Washington did, was time consuming; it’d make me even later.

“Leave it there for the trash haulers, it perfect there.”

“Are you sure??”

“Sure darling. Now let’s just get you backed around dear.”

And the whole block came out – they were mostly retirees – and watched the white Lady swing her big rig around on their tiny block.

“Thank you! Thank you! God Bless you! I called as I left.

They waved me bye.

Got lots of trees trimmed – but, take note, I had not done a ‘U’ turn at all (that day!).

Crystal Balls, ESP and your CDL

Have you ever noticed that a lot of truck drivers always seem to know exactly where they’re going?? Long before I chose to drive I noted how

they never went down streets with low hanging trees or loopy wires and I marveled:

"How did they do it?"

Well, the answer lieth herein:

- When you get your CDL you automatically get ESP downloaded into your brain - whether you know it or not and therefore you will always know where to go which way

...Or Else!

- The Onboard Crystal Ball (OCB) is installed upon your dash right next to your GPS in a manner that no one can see it even the pernicious DOT (Dept. of Trucking) knows you have it there and therefore when they quote :

"You *should* know where you're going" (from Coast to Coast) and by that they are subtly referring to the OCB, or perhaps the ESP you had downloaded. And when in Kansas, you can also tap your ruby-red slippers.

So when a bridge jumps in front of you in Jersey at 13'1" (We've just gotta have 13'6" and 4.1 meters in Canada, bud) that not only my company's Maptuit directions and GPS has routed me directly underneath, we get raised havoc by the DOT (Department of Trucking):

"Why did you not refer to your OCB??"

And, besides, it's one of our Trucking Ten Commandments not to go underneath such low Bridges:

"Thou shall not go under Herein Low Bridges." Even, if said bridge has NO HEIGHT MARKINGS - as ninety nine percent of all bridges do, for "Rules are still rules" as they rant.

And, of course, I hate that when I go under a low bridge, it's kinda crummy it is."

Another Bored Brain Idea (ABBI):

How to amend the worn-out and constant up of the ESP and OCB in regards to low bridges: Hire graffiti 'artists' all across the nation. Pay them ten bucks a shot to do their crimes legally and stencil height markings on every bridge in America - heck they're marking them up anyways! The job could be done in a day!! It doesn't need to be perfect. It just needs to be visible. And they could even get out their aggressive creativity and diddle and daddle the height marker in fancy graffiti lettering - heck that'll get any trucker's attention for sure and it takes one more hoodlum off the streets and away from gangs and makes him into a taxpaying employee! Heck, you can put the million dollar thing up, how come you can't stick a height marker on it in a jiffy? And now the road is that much safer and they

can stop whining about 'dumb truck drivers' hitting the numerous unmarked low bridges, and wearing out all the OCBs in use.

Oh, also those same graffiti artists, while they're at it, could stencil or graffiti in MILEPOSTS in California, New York and Massachusettes, that even the lowliest budgeted state like Alabama has, and thus, with their concern for our safety and welfare, that we would have less likely to get lost and get into mishaps if we had pinpoint accuracy as to our 'Twenty' that all 46 other states have and Canada, too. Same thing, hire the vandals to vandalize the road signs - they're doing it anyway. Let them exercise their gangsta creativity in constructive ways.

You know when I hear them rant about safety and then don't mark their bridges up, I guess there is a bit of magic and myth to trucking after all, to avoid all those unmarked bridges and expectations to do our job in a rather magical way! You know, we might be just fine, my friends, my comrades, only the truth is that nobody knows it.

Well, I'm gonna say sumthun about that!

The Toronto Zoo

When you go to a big, new international city like Toronto your mind is on the numerous freeways you must take and not get lost nor take the forbidden toll route, make it to the QE2 (Queen Elizabeth, II highway) and, therefore, you're not thinking of deep ravines and streams - Canadian Rocky Mountain kind of driving, but that is exactly what was ahead of me when I followed my company's directions to a 'T' and turned left at the Toronto Zoo and a block away I was suddenly now in a very steep and winding ravine!!!

Way down into it I came across a bridge - made of steel grating so that I could see white water rapids flowing swiftly way beneath!!

I set my brakes, turned off the engine and got out and stood at my steers and just looked in open-mouthed amazement at the rapids washing far beneath. There had not been ONE sign warning me of this!!!

An African man drove up to my rig and parked behind it. "Not only can you not cross this, but there is a low bridge right after this." He said. "I'm a taxi driver now, but I used to drive a truck."

"Wow!" and now I was cussing and fussing every gadget that just had to be electronic! I was furious for this mishap - not just at Canadian too, but at my company that would direct me down something like this, and then rant and rave if I didn't get there on time!!!

I found out years later, getting exceedingly angry helped me at times like this too - to go ahead and do a very damned risky thing - like back up the rig up a winding ravine.

Oh, if you only knew! Oh it is not easy, especially when car drivers blitheringly ignore your predicament and sweep past you as your backing up, cliffs drops and they wildly sweep around you!!

The more they did this, the more furious I became. I should have just called the cops (The RCMP or Royal Canadian Mounted Police), but night was falling and it was by far more dangerous to wait there for them. So I backed the rig up the ravine at twilight.

You have to angle your tractor to direct the rear of the trailer in the opposite direction, and when you angle it you cannot see on that side, and the rocky face of the ravine was on that side – the blindside to boot, which is the passenger side and very dangerous!! At times I had to do several pullups to keep the trailer from getting off the track. This was confusing to cars who thought I was changing my mind and going down the gorge after all. No, sometimes it is so paradoxical, to do good going backwards, you sometimes pull forwards to straighten the rig up. And of course car drivers can never ever wait.

One car swept around me and I was thumbing through the dictionary by now to look up adjectives to call him, as I had ran out several turns ago.

“But vee are trrrrrrying to help you!” the French Canadian had cried out his window as he came up to my cab. And with the African taxi driver they both blocked the ravine from cars and thus I went unhindered, backwards slowly up the wildly winding ravine.

When I got to the top at least twenty minutes later, I was shaking and cussing and fussing of course, but I parked to the side and went up to the car drivers who’d helped me and effusively thanked and apologized them, and the sun went down. And the African taxi driver got out his map and got me safe directions to my next stop. He even just up and gave me his mapbook of Toronto.

And when I joke around a little about magic, days like this make you wish you had some! And to think what I just did, well, I bet *I did!!* But, of course, my two friends that helped me that day, I thank you, once again.

Bangor, Maine

Under The USS Antietam, CG 54

My last year on the road was spent delightfully running on two major accounts for my company: one with Walmart on the plains of Indiana, ohio, where I delighted in seeing the backroads of those states that I’d never experienced before, and the second account was out of Pennsylvania running the major cities of the Northern Seaboard such as New York City, Boston from Kitty Hawk, NC to the boarder of Canada and Maine. I was well liked on both accounts and only left to go back home to see my very frail mother.

I was in Bangor, Maine when I got a sat message that my truck was being sold – in Arizona and I began yet another epic load that took me down the coastline, to Kitty Hawk North Carolina, Norfolk Virginia to Atlanta, Georgia. There I dropped and hook a load to Dallas, thence to Arizona and then finally into LA. Suddenly I was far away from Maine and, almost in a culture shock of the epic and grand

changes, that were somehow all was still America, some three thousand miles of journeying later that I was still home here.

And, digital recorder in hand, I still keep on rolling and writing to roll and rolling to write. For, vision of a book comes off in epic, lifelong changing events, but stories within the book come off one chunk at a time and one bit of a time and one paragraph at a time and while unloading and waiting and resting, I was actually quite productive in my little 'writing booth' that I call my truck.

I never would have been a trucker if I hadn't been a writer, and I wouldn't have been able to be a writer without the blessing of being the trucker, the long, open road, with all its hardships and difficulty has this endless capacity to ponder God, story, art and people, and in the end God blessed me with safety, to be a truck driver so I that could be a writer. And I couldn't have been a writer unless I had cried so much, cussed so much in this line of work, that it literally drove me to laughter. Yes, I still fuss, I still pray earnestly around those flying wildly weaving cars, funny thing about trucking for me at least, PRAYING IS A JOB REQUIREMENT! It is a Safety thing, folks!! And in the end, steering wheel and pen in hand, I arrived here at God.

It's time to stop now after seven years, though my friends have done much greater times, Its time to stop and write and, I thank you for coming with me on my little escapades and little foibles and I hope you wont judge me too much, for the different life that I have had on the road. This is where I have landed, the Mare has finally landed.

I hope to chronicle my next adventures are in my collection "On the Waterfront" where I had such adventures deep in the bowels of ships or backing down floating drydock piers, or hydroblasting a nuclear submarine. This is what I am doing now when not pecking on the key board here for you know, dear readers.

My third day on this job found me parking my tractor-trailer directly UNDERneath the keel of the USS Antietam, CG 54, in drydock in the Nassco shipyard, looking up to the great big ships over me in wonder as the sun arose rose colored hue upon her hull, the seagulls began their earnest cries and where I could say prayers could really be answered, for, though the economy had sunk, I, for once had got my way: I had come off the road to San Diego to find my lost love Jack and the world in which he had lived, for my book on him and, well I've come at the cross roads now folks, it's really time to stop and say "Bye-bye!"

Ah, but the open road will always call me...
Always, for Though I am a writer, a sailor, and a seeker
I became and will always will be
An American Long Hauler
God, be with me.

From the Waterfront of
San Diego, California

January, 2012

Gas Hauling, in LA - a final chapter

Well, I worked on every ship and sub you could imagine in San Diego and I hadn't yet met my sailor man, nor gotten a ton of research done for my book on my sailor, Jack, although I was in and amongst my beloved ships and sailors, everyday and fixing them and even crawling in the bilges to clean them with suction of my truck. and really had gotten reacquainted with them since my Navy days but I was aloof and bored on those piers, because my suction pump whined so loudly and endlessly, the seagulls, young kidsailors rushing to work on the piers and gosh I was just bored too. God had granted me my dream and I still Thank Him all the time. Then the Sequester of Congress of 2013 happened and I had little work, put my rent on my MasterCard and kept on writing, focused as ever, to get it done. Then the USS Rentz job happened to me, that I unloaded her of some one hundred thousand gallons of JP-5 in multiple and highly dangerous loads to the fuel farm in Point Loma where they would recycle the fuel and benefit the US Navy.

When I took the fuel to Point Loma's Fuel Farm I met another tanker truck driver from KAG West. I spoke of my interest in making more money and, shoot next thing you know I was hired, had to move to Long Beach and was assigned a trainer and with incredible focus, I became a Gas Hauler in L.A! I never thought I would leave my beloved Navy and Sailors and San Diego!!!! But I needed to make a buck and pay things off, and pay for my writing off, for I had six months of slack work before all this. This is a story in itself of perserverance of the broncho broosting of training and I made it successfully to become a Gas Hauler in LA. It was all so sudden, that my beloved San Diego was gone, at least for now. But things that followed were so favorable, Christian and so very kind and reasonable landlords, housemates, bosses and co-workers, that I could not deny the benevolent and kind hand of my Father and Maker, assisting me and placing me in such a loving place as Long Beach was. And I was able to immediately move forward, pay things off and succeed! I began to write a lot, as well.

And my writing goes on, perserverance as I deliver and am rolled over by the intense work load as always goes with a truck. But since I believe in nothing being wasted, my journey here, with God in my truck, trying so intensely to write at a high level, I believe that I will be able to turn off the key, for at least the intense work load, and pick up the pen, for good and let all the people hear the Faith that made the stories that carried me through all the miles.

The Faith? You ask. Why yes! The Faith in a very real God who took care of this trucker girl all those ugly miles. If only you could see the penultimate danger always at hand, especially with wildly weaving four wheelers, you'd have a true appreciation of my faith. I do so believe! And I walk in my Faith here and now. And in Mercy.

Many stories many books have I already wrote and here I am, ready to be heard and read. I hope you'll believe, as I have, in the benevolent presence of a Father, on high, without whom I could have written so little. He has guarded me and held me and helped me. If you could only know Him, you'd surely Love Him, as anyone would to a presence that is so very kind and personably watches over you. He wants to know you too!

Watch for my novels I have written much, for, I have sojourned much, I have overcome much, despite this silly girl, worthless that I am. You see, I have a partnership with a most immanent presnence that I totally don't deserve (forgive me, dude that I flicked off on I-405 N) and God willing, that I can actually do sumthun for the Kingdom, y'know, of God that is within us and GodWilling, being a

trucker gurl, sailor writer, Here I am. Willing to completely lay before you my story and my suffering to long haul and gas haul and be afraid so very afraid, that I must consult with my Faith, minute by minute, A faith, which was brought to me because of my love of sailors and of writing and story, that, indeed, God rules all.

Appendix: VERSES:

I was telling Short Fuse how the episode of "Mommy Qualcomm" came about and deers and he said "Why don't you write about it" one day and he kept after me for a few months, my mentor again, and when I sat down to actually write it from my journals, it exploded out of me, fully born conceived and written - for we had lived every letter of it, together. And over the next few months we often talked out ideas about things I should write about, and a lot of gratitude is due him for ideas within this book, which came from incidents that we talked and snickered about over the many years.

He's still out there, and my dear friend still, my brother, really. I cherish his friendship. Everyone should have a friend like him!

And Dignity

And Respect,

And Appreciation for what we do

Freckles

I was standing at a truck stop - an old fashioned kind - I always tried to juice up my coffee cup in the 'mom and pop' types that had been all along the historic US 66, in Cameo Colorado on the winding gorge on I-70 that drops from Eisenhower Pass at 12,444 feet down to 5000 feet in the wild and winding ravine the Colorado River carved that flows past Grand Junction. Trucks were roaring in the gorge before me. And I was trying to rev up myself to roll on to Green River and the hundreds of miles of Utah wilderness were not one human soul lived: the Capitol Reef and endless Grand Carved out Canyons before my very eyes.

Perhaps I was tired, for I was sad, I was missing my kid in Alabama. Sometimes I could roll in there to see him but they'd recently divvied up the country and I was confined to the Western half. Somewhere in the mountains I'd got onto the internet and saw pictures of him - and he'd had a beard!

But where did his freckles go?

A rig, like mine, roared in the gorge below:

"AAAAOooooooooooooWWWWW-uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhhh!"

Mimicking my heart song as I thought of him, ah... the boy that he had been! He'd been, like Bambi, as a fawn, spotted and freckled. And so very, very sweet. He was ever so eager to please, I remember and I was always working and gone...

And how did he grow, so ever proud and tall,

No longer so small,

But, where did that boy go?

"AAAAA0000000000OOWWWW---uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh!"

And I was ever out here.

And I would roll and I would sigh:

Have you heard the howls

Of the longhaulers nearby?

Heard the *Doppler Shift* of their cry?

"AAAAA0000000000OOWWWWWW---uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhhh!"

So lonely by and by

On the highway, over there, up high

Singing their songs of redemptions to roll:

"AAAAA0000000000WWW--uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh!"

I did not see the freckles on my kids face
Where did they go?
In this long, long, long hauling race
Are now covered with a beard

"AAAAA0000000000OWWWWW--uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh!"

Oh my
I didn't see the tears I would cry
If I didn't watch every curve
So tight!

"AAAAA0000000000WWW--uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh!"

Every night to my sleep I do sigh
And drowsy to the roar of their cry
For these tear drops in my eye,
My longhaulin, rollin, lullaby

And now he's buying himself a house,
He's got a girl he now wants to please
I did not see his sweetheart this year
Rolling, rolling, rolling up here

And I am up here, fearless and high
In this mountainous sky

"AAAAA0000000000WWW--uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh!"

These are the songs of their cry
Of the songs of the longhaulers lullaby,
On the highway, up high
So long, my kid and my kin see ya
Carry on! Without me...
See ya, bye-bye...

An American Truck Driving Man

Would you do this job, IF:

You had to chain up over Vale, or Donner this year?

Cross the Canadian Rockies in Winter?

Go over Elk, in the fury of a windstorm?

Drive down wily, icy Cabbage Patch in Oregon?

I CAN

I AM

An American Truck Driver Man

(And I am a woman!) I am your neighbor, or your sister. I am someone's mother! Holding the job of a man - or two!

Who'll do WHAT YOU Won't or Can't DARE do!

Would you do this job IF

very few bridges are labeled with their heights?

Had to cross a filthy dark, potholed truck stops at nights, where they

Don't stop the whores from whoring the place?

Deliver in NYC, Brooklyn the Bronx or Staten Island?

And then stay there all night, in a dock??

Would you??

Could you??

Would you do this job IF

You seldom got to see you family?

Got home as if it were some kind of luxury to be there?

Had to stay out at least three weeks at a time?

Would you?

I CAN

I AM

An American Truck Driving Man

Would you spend every night in a different city?

If you can say yes to one or a few questions, you are what we call a local driver, or, worse a four wheeler,

If you can say yes to many of these questions,

You belong to the special breed,

Called *The Longhaulers*.

Courage, guts, they are ours!

I fear I can hear winter distant howls

Even in the early Augustus morns

He calls us into exile

Of white heart wintered days and ways
 I can
 I am
 An American Truck Driving Man

The Economy falls, and they still have
Trouble filling our spots
Because it's not just a skill
It's a lifestyle
That most cannot do for so very long
And onward we roll on
 And on...
I can
 I am
 An American Truck Driving Man

Fall

Autumn in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvanny hillsides
Are set ablaze in autumn's fires:
Every wick's a candle lit
And a testament
To the agony of beauty
That is fall's fury.

Corridors of Fire

Burnished cheeks have I
As I pass through the corridors
Left and right
Both sides in a channel
Like a tunnel
Through your Forests of fire
I have the fever, ney
The distemper
Your beauty is vengeance
Leaves like lava, fall like embers
I brinish my thoughts intrepid tendrils mock
And you blaze and alight a torch

To my eyes!

Trees of Fall

Why do you shed your leaves so soon?
I walk now the forests are bare and brown and asleep,
and agloom
Ah, but the trees know what they're doing
better than I
and not yet a week passes and we have, after six long months, snow.
The trees know what they're doing!! They *Know*!

Winter

The Heart of Winter's Shroud

Is Mystery
Oh, where did the world in summer I knew go
All tucked in to bed, to sleep it all away
The White blankets upon the land
And Imagination and Dreams began
To think of Olden Days
Coming alive under the White
Of when Man wasn't so proud
But a mere subject to the Whims of Nature
And to Winter's Fury
Whose howls in through the cracks in
My windshield still say,
You may think you've got it
Made to run the road as if in June
But, obeisance to the Winter is
overdue,
 Man,
 You're not a Longhauler until you've done
 The Long Road alone
 In Winter's Land

Winterwarfare

Winter is devastating like a war
Exciting of an ensuing battle to come,
The autumn air yields to the stronger outcry
Of Winter's taught breaths
There's the tingle in the air
Laden with down of snow
To come, thick

*As sloven sleep
Of Death
Natures foreclosed upon the land*

Spring

Was it the Susquehanna, or the Erie Canal, or the finger lakes of New York, I know not, but after mountains deliverance to a gentle rolling hills and body of water, uniced laying there, there was the little girl of spring in all her pink and rose, delicacy of the tenders of springs return to the barren denuded lands of winter's malice.

But, she could be mean, even the little girl of spring, she direct strong winds and Nor' Easters and Canadian Clippers, all battles of Spring she wages. And piles of snow burying the new blooms. Watch out for the wyles of spring, the Ides of March and her touch turning to sun, and hope that she'd come in full bloom soon again.

Resources:

If I don't have enough material I will solicit in the Truck Stops
memorable stories

Research, like Werner's Story, of how the big trucking companies
started out with one truck and a man with one dream

How Truck Drivers Helped Katrina, Rita and Irene Hurricanes and other
storms

How Truck Drivers Help with the CB

How the Dot looks down on us, but not car drivers

How Truck drivers help out in times of trouble

Read truck stop magazines for ideas.

Edit Log:

1/6/2014 7:14 PM going to do one page edit per day, so theoretically book can be done in 109 days, or 3 months - april 2014. Actually there are 10 pages of poems, so this is even more do-able! 99 days, minus poems

7/24/2013 3:01 PM

12/23/2012 6:51:26 AM WasteLands/Mythic Journey concepts interested in thrilled with to learn hee

10/8/2012 10:38:08 AM removed section called "Tears" moved to "Monster" a story with a fiction slant, to disguise my identity

6/28/2019 8:24:10 AM Adding place names/years after each story, to delineate long journey within

3/4/2012 7:53:26 AM Chula Vista. Adding ending about Action Cleaning

11/24/2011 10:08:40 AM Scranton Thanksgiving

11/12/2011 5:48:24 PM Scranton HT.

10/30/2011 5:04:37 AM Set goal to have short list of things added to this piece by xmas, all finished and then move into delightful 'tinker-mode' a richly creative and fun time that I love and fully explore what I've put down here. Also have a few things to add to DS and P8 by xmas. Tinker mode is not so physically exhaustive as the intitial typing in. /05:51

Now need to fully concentrate on my health focus:

'Sap and Green and Ernestine'

10/30/2011 5:02:41 AM inserted partitions to organize material, though may remove then later, they give some pieces some ties together like the wildlife I saw, Storms, Psychos, Dangers and the Safety Nazis

10/29/2011 7:08:42 AM Harrisburg Nor'Easter. Goal set by Xmas

To have all episodes typed in did many today/6:04 PM

10/28/2011 12:06:32 PM goulds Added Boston episode/3:32 PM

10/27/2011 9:08:55 AM Scranton added to Pennsylvanny fires poem

10/17/2011 5:03:13 PM Potsdam, ny

10/9/2011 10:39:59 AM goulds 39,061 /14:09

10/6/2011 9:17:04 AM Hickory rest plaza. Ampersand denotes section not finished, to find it easier & /11:12:36 AM 37,210 words/14:01

10/5/2011 1:34:34 PM in a rest area in ny so tired last night/14:53

10/4/2011 12:24:06 PM Goulds/4:21 PM 34,506 words

10/3/2011 2:13:56 PM Cortland, NY

10/2/2011 6:29:00 AM Goulds

10/1/2011 6:08:05 PM Maywood new jersey

10/1/2011 5:56:52 AM Goulds

9/28/2011 4:50:02 AM near Boston, ma

9/27/2011 3:10:52 PM Gouldsboro 27,848 over 3 thou added! BZ Mare /7:02 PM

9/26/2011 12:21:18 PM near Ravine, Pa pilot

9/25/2011 7:56:12 AM Scranton, PA word count 24,147 added four thousand words today!

9/19/2011 3:43:40 PM Bangor, ME

9/3/2011 4:16:54 PM

8/31/2011 2:47:12 PM Gouldsboro Sears Acct

8/28/2011 2:53:30 PM Carlisle, Hurricane Holiday Irene

8/6/2011 8:13:17 AM Omaha

2/6/2011 11:37:25 PM Fontana Home Time 665 words